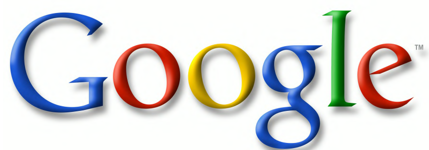

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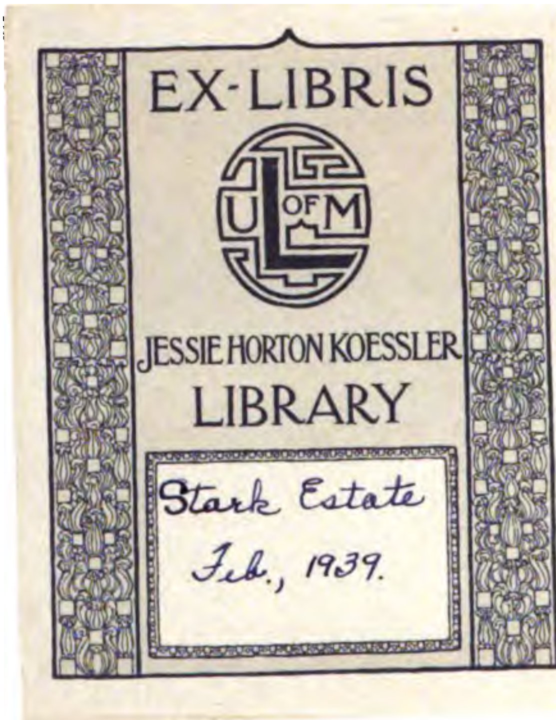

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A BOOK OF THE SEVERN

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BLAEN-HAFREN—NEAR THE SOURCE OF THE SEVERN

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A BOOK OF THE SEVERN

BY

A. G. BRADLEY

AUTHOR OF "ROUND ABOUT WILTSHIRE," ETC.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY

R. H. BUXTON

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1920

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A BOOK OF THE SEVERN

CHAPTER I

THE CRADLE OF THE SEVERN

From high Plinlimmon's shaggy side
Three streams in three directions glide;
To thousands at their mouth who tarry,
Honey, gold and mead they carry.
Flow also from Plinlimmon high
Three streams of generosity;
The first a noble stream indeed
Like rills of Mona, run with mead;
The second bears from vineyards thick
Wine to the feeble and the sick;
The third till time shall be no more
Mingled with gold shall silver pour.
—LEWIS GLYNCOTHI (trans).

THERE is a lonesome spot, high perched upon the eastern shoulder of many-headed old Plinlimmon, where in the calm that so often succeeds the storm in these wild uplands you may hear a strange duet. A melody as old, to be sure, as the eternal hills whose fountains have sung it since they came up out of the ocean in the night of time and fell, piping their cradle songs, into the waste of waters beneath which the lower hills and valleys of wild Wales still lay submerged.

Nowhere else within my knowledge do two great rivers actually mingle their infant voices, uniting as it were in flood time to break the silence of a still primeval solitude. Caprice, accident, possibly old map-makers, have long ago decided that to the southern fork of the Wye, a mile away, should

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be assigned the honour of that river's birth; and not without reason, since it is a trifle longer than the other branch up which a rough road runs from the abandoned lead mine to the smaller one now in operation. But the successful assertion of this particular brook may be said to have had another and narrower escape two miles below from the claims of the Tarenig which, rising high in the very breast of Plinlimmon, joins the Wye at Pant-Mawr on the Aberystwith road. For the Tarenig is at least equal in volume to its rival. Moreover, it continues what up to this point was the mission of the Wye and leads the road traveller up to the high pass over the toe of the Plinlimmon whence he drops sharply down through scenes renowned for their beauty, to the low country of Cardiganshire and the sea. But all this does not prevent one source of the Wye from piping in unison with one source of the Severn, which last again failed to acquire honours, and is known to perhaps a dozen people, as the Hore birthplace. In this case, however, it was the only possible rival and indeed might have been rather a formidable one, for there is little difference in the size of the two streams when they rush together under the fern clad shoulder of Iorddu and united cut deep flumes in the rocky floor that underlies the mossy, tussocky pastures of Rhyd-yr-onen. If uproar could have helped the claims of the Hore against her successful rival we should doubtless to-day be climbing the green, rocky gorge on the eastern slope of Pen Plinlimmon for the natal fount of the Severn, instead of groping for it amid the peat bogs above Blaen Hafren. For the violence with which it leaps down the mountain side exceeds any efforts of the infant Severn, or the Hafren, as we should call it while up in this country. It is this alone that makes its music audible while we are still in earshot of the fainter pipings of the waters of Wye.

You may go to the source of the Severn, if that be your sole object, by three different routes. There is no easy way to it, for which we may perhaps be thankful, but only a long and rather laborious one which must be faced on foot—an

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intimidating factor perhaps to most people, young or old, in these machine-ridden times. Now it is not in the least likely that the able-bodied who will not walk up a mountain would want to see the source of the Severn or of any other river. But in the case of such whose spirit is willing but whose flesh is weak, the simplest plan would be to ascend Plinlimmon from the Eistedda-Curig on the Aberystwith road and cross over the mountain to its north-eastern shoulder, whence you may look right down on the bog out of which the Severn springs. As to the pedestrian—I love that portentous designation, merely for the sake of those wayfaring books of generous type and quarto shape and Georgian date and old-fashioned S's and quaint woodcuts of familiar scenes, before steam, electricity, or petrol had defiled them—As to the pedestrian, then, the willing and capable walker, he may start with advantage from the inn at Pant-mawr on the Aberystwith road and follow the Wye by the miners' road to its unrecognised northern source, already alluded to, and thence, crossing the Wye-Severn watershed, pursue the wild boggy sheep walks that sweep round the base of Plinlimmon to Blaen Hafren. A humble and astonishingly secluded homestead this, tucked into the foot of the mountain just below the source of the Severn. For myself, I have travelled all these ways at various times; but, as we are concerned here with the Severn itself and not merely with its source, we should naturally follow the river up from Llanidloes. For that little town marks the point where the Hafren ceases to be a mountain torrent, breaks out from its hitherto tortuous glens into a meadowy vale and, uniting with its sister streams, the Clwyedog and the Dulas, assumes, in English parlance at anyrate, the name of the greatest of British rivers. The word Severn is in fact a corruption of Hafren, the initial letter H being interchangeable with S in the Older British dialects, while the rest is obvious enough. Llanidloes, moreover, is one of the few places available for sojourn which give access to this spacious and little known mountain region, in round figures over forty miles long by twenty in width, and extending

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southward from the Dovey and the Cambrian railroad to the Vale of Towy in Carmarthenshire.

It is some twelve miles from Llanidloes to Blaen Hafren. Though wheels are quite feasible for perhaps a third of the distance upon the narrow hilly road above the left bank of the stream, after that they would prove worse than superfluous to any one of reasonable walking powers. But you will have passed out of the upper end of this lovely valley, of which more anon, and travelled so far into the wilds beyond its last homestead as to have given up all idea of any further sign of civilisation. A rough trail sidling along the broken moorland with the Hafren brawling in the boggy trough below, would carry no suggestion to the most accustomed eye of anything else to be looked for but illimitable wastes of bog and rolling sheep pastures, terminating always in the high broken wall of Plinlimmon drawing gradually nearer. At the last bend, however, and pressed right under the foot of the mountain, the solitary little homestead of Blaen Hafren, planted on a single green patch of meadow, comes, or would come, if unexpected, as a prodigious surprise. A little grey house, a modest barn, overhung by a few ash trees, with the Hafren, denuded of its last feeder, and now a trifling brook, prattling beside it. In the rear of the small enclosure a natural wall of rock holds back the stream which, plashing over it on a dry summer day, makes but a mimic cataract, though I have no doubt in flood time it stirs up a fine commotion.

Such is the eminently romantic spot where the Severn may be said to first leap out into the full light of day. For the north-eastern rampart of many-headed Plinlimmon here rises abruptly upwards. A steep climb up a grassy rock-littered gorge leads hence upon the great wedge of dreary bog, out of which the natal springs of the river ooze and trickle into their first faint trace of a defined channel. Sabrina, at any rate, unlike some of her rivals away to the eastward, is no ditch-born maid. Cradled among cloudy solitudes rarely trodden by human foot, watched over by brooding mountain-tops amid a silence that is seldom broken but by the plaint

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of sheep, the raven's croak, and the curlew's wild alarms, she is surely a maid of noble birth! And the birth-place of any river, above all of a famous river, has a fascination of its own, I take it, for anyone who can feel at all.

The ancients had river gods; we too have them in our minds and feel their qualities. For rivers are things of life and personality, of soul and character. They are always eloquent, whether the tones be soft and soothing or loud and angry. Their moods are things of ceaseless interest to those who dwell beside them, and not seldom of dread, for they are beyond human control and this vastly helps to deify them. They never fail to enhance the beautiful and to redeem the commonplace in nature, and the æsthetic debt we owe to our rivers is above all estimate.

Regions lacking in streams and rivers seem to proclaim of themselves their incompleteness, though there are lovers of nature and landscape who, inured no doubt to their virtual absence, appear to feel nothing of this and find perfection without so much as a glimpse of water. Yonder hill or mountain has stood there for thousands of years, and we feel the full mystery of it when in the mood. But the music of the stream in the valley below that has played the same airs for unnumbered centuries touches one even more, for it is active, not passive, a voice always speaking, and always melodiously, whether softly as a chalk stream swishing upon the gravel or loudly as a torrent thundering on the mountain side. Some of our river gods are men and some are women and this quite, as it would seem, capriciously. The Tyne is masculine beyond a doubt. Even the Romans had it so and have left us their conception of his rugged godhead in stone rescued from the bed of the river itself. Yet who ever invoked Tweed in the masculine gender, while the Wye as such is still more unthinkable. Father Thames has proclaimed his sex for all time; but the Severn has been a lady since literature began. This is well, since it disposes at once of all rival claims to sovereignty, leaving the one King, the other Queen, of British rivers. And, if the lady slightly exceeds her rival in inches,

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there is nothing abnormal in that, while, if she surpasses him in beauty, it is only natural and right she should do so. Oh yes! I hear plainly enough the instant protest of the Londoner and the south countryman, one of convention rather than of conviction. For who among them all has any acquaintance worth mentioning with the Severn? After all, Berkshire and Oxfordshire are pleasant enough, but they are not Wales, nor even Shropshire and Worcestershire, by a long way.

The Severn, moreover, it must be said at once, is not a sociable river. It ministers but little to the gregarious instincts of men and women and has comparatively little truck with house-boats, pleasure-boats, water picnics, and all such traffic, as keeps the Thames in a flutter the whole summer long. There are neither villas nor trim gardens anywhere on the banks of Severn. It would not do. For, though a lady, Sabrina is a Celt and mountain-born, and flies into sudden passions of flood and foam that make her dangerous as a near neighbour. Then again the busy crowded tidal waters of the Thames appeal to an altogether different set of emotions, which not even faintly approximate to those aroused on the towers of Berkeley Castle, in the churchyard at Newnham, on the fir-crowned summit of May's hill, or the glorious perch of the Wyndcliff that commands the junction of the tidal Wye and Severn. As the low murky shores of the winding and crowded Thames recede on either side of your steamer's wake, you are probably thinking imperially of the present or quite recent centuries, and no doubt thanking God that you are a Briton. But as you look over the sandy estuary of the Severn, your senses are arrested by the great sweeps of luxuriant landscape of hill and plain, rich in the colouring of this soft western country, and if your thoughts should stray backward here, it is to far remoter times and to the part that Severn played as a barrier between the races which made earlier Britain and those that developed a later England.

But of all this enough and more than enough for the

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moment. The Severn is yet but a prattling brook, and the subject of this chapter is the country of her birthplace and her prolific parent, Plinlimmon, or in the Old Welsh, Pimplummon (the five summits). I had been more than once on former occasions within a mile of Blaen Hafren from other directions without a suspicion of its existence, for maps are apt to overlook it. It was on a fairly recent and blazing hot August day that I actually made its acquaintance; and we were thankful enough for the rest and shelter it offered. For the way up the river from Llanidloes had proved a weary if a beautiful pilgrimage in the breathless heat of the glens, while thunder clouds were gathering ominously above the hills behind us, and such light airs as moved followed in our tracks. Indeed, our goal was reached precisely at one of those critical moments of rural life when even the hospitable code of the Welsh sheep farmer is automatically in abeyance. Father, mother, son and daughter, horse and cart, the entire force of the little holding, were making frantic endeavours to rush the last of the well-cured hay crop, for no rain had fallen for weeks, from the meadow into the barn before the threatening tempest burst. The inevitable collies which have to be faced at every Welsh homestead were in sole possession and at leisure to greet us with those paroxysms of rage, which you might think, till you are used to them, that nothing but blood would appease. The breathless haymakers shouted their apologies in Welsh to my companion, who was familiar both with them and their tongue. So having patched up a truce with the dogs, we entered the little kitchen living-room and with much thankfulness proceeded to enjoy our ease and incidentally our sandwiches and etceteras, the code which prescribes the offer of milk being in abeyance, for which last I was not wholly unthankful. For milk is the sign and seal of upland hospitality in Wales, particularly in the more unfrequented districts. To come out of the hospitable encounter gracefully in English-speaking districts is no easy matter. But when Welsh is the only medium of communication my shortcomings in that tongue leave only the unpleasant alternatives of appearing discourteous or feeling

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physically uncomfortable. From our snug harbourage at the very top of the valley we had a fine view of the storm, though it failed to reach us and so spared our haymakers. The thunder roared and the fork lightning flashed incessantly against the dark curtain that hung over the hill tops between Llanidloes and Llangurig. But eventually murk and uproar rolled away over the high moors of Kerry and with strange caprice, as we afterwards found, to fill the brooks bank high in one valley and leave its next neighbour thirsty and uncomforted. It must be a weird spot in a big snowstorm this topmost abode of all the thousands which from first to last sit upon Severn's banks. Standing here and looking eastward over the lonely moors as they paled and whitened beneath the black pall of the thunder clouds, I tried to picture the little homely kitchen room in the throes of a winter snowstorm, with its hearth ablaze and the lamp alight; a solitary speck of warmth and cheer amid the black night and the lashing of the blizzard, but alert with anxious thoughts of sheep buried beneath the waste of snow heaped up for miles and miles on every side.

The pressure was now over in the meadow. The few remaining haycocks were safe enough, for the day was still young; and, as we passed out into the returning sunshine, the good wife stuck her fork into the ground and with quite superfluous apologies hastened housewards to boil a kettle and quiet her hospitable conscience with some modest offering. The loaded hay cart, too, halted, and the goodman mopping his rubicund and streaming face, received with eagerness such items of news from the outer world and the metropolis of Llanidloes as my friend shouted up to him in his best Welsh. The Hafren to-day was falling over the rocky ledge behind the house, which gives its name to the spot, with a sadly attenuated stream. From here, as already noted, a half hour's climb or less brings you to the actual source of the river. This is slighted by guidebooks. There is no precise natal basin into which 'Arry and 'Arriet could drop pins and forecast their matrimonial possibilities. Indeed, scarcely any one ever comes here. Borrow

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says he did and professes to have found the first trickle, from which he knelt down and lapped, and then, more power to him, made the usual oration. Yet there is little doubt that it was the source of the Hore, not the Severn, from which the prophet drank and derived those moments of exaltation.

Till quite recently every boy and girl in England was taught that Plinlimmon was the third highest mountain in Wales. No doubt most middle-aged and elderly folk still think so, for the *memoria technica* of the nursery and schoolroom is apt to survive the oblivion to geographical trifles of a public school. Borrow himself makes the same blunder, with the confidence which is all his own, and he would possibly have assaulted anyone who questioned it. I do not think the surveys could ever have been 600 feet out! It must have been sheer absentmindedness, I fancy, on the part of the "Eminent Geographers" who thus misled our innocent perceptions. Their successors have apparently not yet discovered that there is a shapely mountain peak in South Wales, to wit, the Brecon beacon, 2,900 feet high, as they never allude to it in their most comprehensive list of altitudes. Plinlimmon is not 2,500 feet, and is surpassed by four mountains even in South Wales that occur to me at once. I daresay on the Welsh list it stands fifteenth or twentieth.

But one can see what these erratic souls were dimly groping after, as Plinlimmon is the chief summit of the third great mountain group of North Wales, as they reckon North Wales and South Wales is a region still unexploited by the educational topographer. Plinlimmon, in truth, stands on the border-line of the two divisions, and is a mountain of far greater importance than its height, and, I admit, not very striking shape, would indicate. The guide-books decry it and practically discourage their readers from crossing the Dovey and exploring what is in fact the wildest portion of wild Wales. But the guide-books are incorrigible. The offence of Plinlimmon appears to be that its two chief summits are rounded on the top and that it is flanked by a "vast extent of dreary bog". It depends how you look at these things. A man sees just

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what he is fit to see, and these gentry seem to see things, I won't say with the actual eye of a bean-feaster, but rather as if they had bean-feasters in their eye! Dreary! Yes, if profound solitude over infinite distance, as we count distance in this little island, is repellant to the man of taste, who escapes from the crowd for a time to seek this very thing in such primitive Highlands as we have left to us. And in these hundreds of square miles of wilderness, of which the Plinlimmon tract forms a part, he will find neither notice boards, nor fences, nor even stone dykes, and very few of his fellow-men, native or alien.

Plinlimmon then, the Mother, or rather the Father, according to local mythology, of so many rivers, deserves the distinction accorded it, though not for the reason given by those old inept geographers. It merits such prominence for its wide extent, its far-spreading skirts and flanks, its commanding position as dividing North from South Wales, its glorious outlook and its historic associations. It would be idle to recount here the many conflicts it has witnessed between the old native Princes of Wales—of Gwynedd, of Powys, of Dyfed, to say nothing of less exalted territorial lords who reigned in Arwystli, Cedewain or Careinion, in Ceredigion, Elineth, Buallt, or Keri. There was always, as the old records tell us, bad blood stirring around the sheep walks of "Pumplummon," and plenty of it was shed.

When the greater Princes themselves were not on the war-path with predatory hosts one can well fancy how readily disputes over pasturage or hunting rights would set by the ears the leading chieftains who asked for no better diversion than a fight. But we need not go back here to the days of the Rhyses and Llewelyns, the Madocs, Merediths, and Gwenwynwyns. For much more recently Plinlimmon was intimately concerned with the famous Owen Glyndwr, who through the first decade of the fifteenth century kept Wales in a blaze, the border counties scared and harried, and Henry IV so constantly on the strain as with little doubt to shorten his much troubled life. For it was in 1401, the second year of the rising, that,

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having left North Wales in a state of rebellion, Owen planted the dragon standard on the summit of Plinlimmon and thence descended upon the centre and the south. Indeed, he had perhaps his narrowest escape here. For, with only at the moment some five hundred men around him, he was attacked and surrounded on a spur of the mountain just beyond the Severn source by a strong force of Anglo-Flemings who had marched up from Pembrokeshire. But he cut his way through them, to fight for many a year afterwards, to achieve much contemporary fame as a magician as well as a warrior in the eyes of his enemies, and to win immortality as the national hero of his country.

Six years afterwards the shepherds on Plinlimmon must have listened with terror and amazement to the strange thunder of artillery. It was young Prince Henry, who spent his youth mainly in fighting Owen, not in rollicking with Falstaff, and was now in 1407 before Aberystwith with half the chivalry of the English court battering the castle which was erroneously supposed to contain Owen. He had brought big guns with him, the very first to be used against a British castle, which in this case, it may be incidentally noted, defied their thunders successfully. During the closing years of Owen's activity, when surrounded only by a band of faithful followers, he both eluded capture and even smote his enemies from time to time with sharp unexpected strokes; and in these days of his decline Plinlimmon and its neighbourhood were beyond doubt his frequent refuge.

Peace has reigned upon the Plinlimmon waste ever since Owen's day. South Wales, to be sure, still meets North Wales in an academic sense upon the mountain brow and along the foaming course of the wild Tarenig. But these and all such boundary lines as stirred up the men of old to deeds of blood are now but the mild concern of county councils and of rural deaneries. Whatever the five heads with which the ancients credited Plinlimmon, two only, and for obvious reasons, represent what we mean by the mountain to-day, namely, Plinlimmon itself, or the Cardiganshire peak to the

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westward, and its almost twin sister of Montgomery, a long mile to the east of it, a high drooping shoulder from one to two miles long connecting them. From among its mosses the Tarenig springs, and plunging down a gradually deepening glen divides the counties. The eastern height, slightly the lower of the two, is often called by its ancient name of Arwystli, being within that old subdivision of Powys which existed long before the county of Montgomery was formed into a shire. It is an easy walk up either from the Eisteddfa-Curig, at the top of the pass which is surmounted by the main road from the east to the Devil's bridge, Aberystwith, and the coast of Cardigan. There is a small farm and a cottage or two by the road side; but the spot, which by its name indicates the resting-place of Curig, is of much higher significance than could be derived from a trifling sheep farm. For it was here St. Curig, an early missionary from Ireland or Armorica and the reputed founder of many little churches in these parts, first rested on his way inland and looked about him.

If he had been meditating a hermit's life, he would assuredly not have been disappointed. But for a zealous evangelist the prospect of the country from up here must have left a good deal to be desired. He pressed on, however, down the Tarenig and the Wye, and the beautifully-placed little village of Llangurig, with the picturesque successor of the church he there founded, still after some fifteen hundred years keeps his memory green. But the Saint's work and influence spread far beyond the fountains of the Wye and Severn. In the middle ages friars still carried his image about under their coats and worked wonders with it. Whatever the Free Churches may disestablish and disendow, they will not disestablish a single Welsh saint with all his images and miracles; that is quite certain. For fourteen or fifteen centuries St. Curig has been firmly in possession of the whole country, and he will be there picturesquely imbedded in the name of every third village in Wales to the end of time. It is strange that the modern puritan and the ancient saint should have thus to

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lie down together. But that the Saint will long outlast the Calvinist there cannot be a shadow of a doubt, and, whatever things inconceivable to present vision may hereafter come to pass, the map of Wales will for all time remain a sort of clergy list of the ancient British Church.

The comparatively few strangers who ascend Plinlimmon—for it is 17 miles from Aberystwith, the only serious tourist centre in South Wales—nearly always start from the Steddfa, as they can get this far on a main road either from the east or from the west. Long ago there was a little inn here, and its sign-board was thus inscribed: "The notorious hill of Plinlimmon is on the premises and will be shown to any gentlemen travellers who wish to see it". As this point is 1350 feet above sea level, there is only another 1100 feet to rise, and this up either shoulder to either peak is of such easy grade that the actual distance is from two to three miles. I believe there is a circuitous trail amid and around the spongy bogs that clothe the mountain nearly to its summit, which you may follow comparatively dry shod. But, as I have always myself gone up alone and never seen any one else on the mountain, I have never troubled about it but taken a more or less straight course up one of the two flanks. I admit that the walking is rough, if the slope is gentle, and even in a dry summer tolerably moist, if that be of any consequence to serious climbers.

It would be superfluous to record that the view from either summit is well worth the ascent when the elements are kind, though I am inclined to think that their frowns sometimes make for greater glory on a mountain top than their smiles. On my first ascent of Plinlimmon some years ago it gave me a display of the former mood which I shall never forget. On my last visit, but the other day, its waste of mountains lay basked in sunshine and a luminous air that exposed the furthest bounds, I should imagine, that are ever revealed to the naked eye from even this wonderful vantage-point. On another occasion I have gone up the Cardigan peak, where by the way there are three cairns, and then crossed the

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shoulder above the source of the Tarenig to the Arwystli summit above the source of the Wye, and thence back again to the Steddfa. This makes an admirable round for an afternoon, involving perhaps a six-mile walk, though much of it is of a laborious nature. The Arwystli summit is in truth something of a table-land, though showing in the approach a bold crown, so far expanding is it and so nearly level. The fierce storms of ages seem to have fairly wrenched away every scrap of vegetation and left little but a hard rough pan of dry, barren, and boggy soil, littered here and there with whitish-grey rocks. You may travel perhaps for a mile or more over this sterilised wind-tortured waste with but slight decline till you find yourself looking directly down upon the boggy source of the Severn.

One day that I have particularly in mind was the hottest of a hot spell. The thermometer was far into the eighties, and, as the haze, almost inevitable to such a temperature, lay upon the land, I went up the Arwystli mountain in the mere hope of getting some air. There was scarcely a breath of it, however, even at that altitude, and, being tolerably exhausted, I lay down upon my back, where the north-western slope begins to dip sharply, and fell instantly into a profound sleep. I mention this because on waking, or rather, while struggling slowly back from dreamland into full consciousness, I could not imagine to what pinnacle I had been mysteriously wafted. The sun was westering; the heat haze had wholly lifted, and far below, the beautifully-diversified solitude which stretches from Plinlimmon to the Dovey lay gleaming in a hundred radiant colours—for it was August—with the lion shape of Cader Idris rising blue and clear-cut in the background to a height that might just as well have been ten as three thousand feet. A glorious patch-work, this far expanding interval of tawny moor grass, and purple heather, of dark crag and green bracken, of vivid scraps of meadow, of twinkling tarns and the silvery threads of rushing streams. The little lake, the birth-place of the Rheidol, glittered immediately below my feet, with the streak of the new-born

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river hurrying northward through the bog to meet its early tributaries. I had remembered when ascending Plinlimmon on a former and less peaceful occasion, how a delightful phrase recently encountered in an ancient guide-book kept recurring to my mind. "The Voluptuary," it informed its readers, "will find little in this region (the Plinlimmon waste) to detain him." "The Voluptuary"—this is surely splendid. It would have been a poor but passable pleasantry; but it was not meant that way, not by any means! On this occasion, however, I felt that the Voluptuary, sweltering in the low country under a temperature of 88 in the shade, would have asked for nothing better than to lie on his back on the top of Plinlimmon, could he have been transported thither without an effort.

To revert for a moment, however, to the Rheidol: some may need reminding that the proximity of its birthplace and the beauty of its brief resounding course have lifted it into legendary and poetic sistership with the Severn and the Wye, and made it the third and youngest of the mountain's famous trio of daughters. I am equally sure that the pretty legend of the three streams and how it was that they came to take their various courses to the sea will be new to most of my readers; so here it is. Now the god of the mountains, who was in this case of the masculine gender and, yet more, the father of three blooming daughters Hafren, Gwy and Rheidol, in a sportive and generous moment announced that he would give to each of them as much territory for their dower as they could traverse between daylight and dark and reach the sea, where they would find their lovers waiting for them. Hafren was up and away first, and, choosing the longer but the easier route and the most fertile country, headed eastward, and, taking the line of least resistance through the Welsh mountains, did not turn south and seawards till she had cleared them. Gwy awoke soon after and, finding her elder sister had already started, decided that her best chance lay in a more direct if stiffer line of country. So off she dashed south-westward through the mountains and caught her sister

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up just as she was about to enter the Bristol Channel. Rheidolyn, however, the youngest, the pet of her father, and an incorrigible lie-a-bed, slept on till the sun was high in the heavens and the old man came to rouse her with the news that her sisters had started hours ago and to upbraid her for throwing away her opportunities. But she was a smart maiden and, as she rubbed her eyes, a simple way out of the difficulty suddenly became plain to her. For her cot lay some distance to the west of those of her sisters, which faced the east so that they knew nothing of the world behind the big mountain. Rheidol, on the contrary, had been accustomed to peep down the glens that led the other way and had more than a suspicion of a nearer and another ocean. So she leaped from her couch and without more ado hurried westward, tearing down the mountain glens and madly bounding over the rocks at break-neck speed, till she reached the Irish sea well before the sun had set, and gained both her dower and her lover, whom she found awaiting her. Hence the Old Welsh saw: "There is no impossibility, saith Rheidolyn, to the maiden who has a fortune to lose or a lover to gain".

The whole of Cardigan Bay lay spread out beneath me on this wonderful evening as I returned over the mountain top. Its northern horn, the long peninsula of Lleyn, distant but clear cut, with its blue isolated upstanding peaks, craned far westward to where it clenches a defiant fist against the racing tides and buffeting storms that in their season rage around Bardsey and Aberdaron. To the south-westward and less remote, the rugged headlands of Pembroke, like pale grey clouds, lay out in long succession upon the motionless sea. As interesting and no less striking in its way was the vision due southward, where from the foot of Plinlimmon there rolled away, ridge upon ridge, crest upon crest, that mountain wilderness of whose very existence scarcely any outsiders have even a suspicion. I might truthfully add that very few Welshmen but those living around its skirts have a much better acquaintance with it. This indeed is wild Wales literally at its

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wildest. A few stray wanderers of unusual enterprise may occasionally be found in the waste to the north of Plinlimmon. But into this upland to the south of it practically not one ever penetrates. But for the rare turf-cutter or the shepherd farmer, it is for miles and miles a complete and perfect solitude. As far as the eye can see from the summit of Plinlimmon, which, being a little higher than any of it, overlooks it all, there is not a suggestion of human life nor scarcely even a patch of anything but primitive moorland with its varied colouring and ever-shifting shadows. I should like to stand on Plinlimmon on such another day as this with some one who really thinks he has a good working knowledge of his own country. I think I could promise him a surprise. There are much grander solitudes in North Wales and in the Lake country. But south of the Scottish Highlands—and I speak with some knowledge—there is nowhere a solitude at once so lonely and so large. It used to be said quite recently that you could walk from the Dovey valley to the line of the L. and N. W. R. between Builth and Carmarthen without crossing fence or wall; and, taking a bee line up hill and down dale, this would be a little trifle of fifty miles.

Over the larger portion, namely, to the southward of Plinlimmon, I can affirm from personal knowledge that such is still the case. Should any reader be moved to such an unlikely enterprise, and succeed in achieving it by the end of the second day, which from the nature of the going would tax the hardiest wight, and not have had enough of it, he could prolong his journey for yet another full day under somewhat the same conditions. For, dropping down to the grassy watershed between the Yrfon and Towy valleys, which the high climbing railroad tunnels, you step right upon the grouse moors and sheep walks of the Eppynts; and but a narrow habitable glen divides these again from the further wilds of the Carmarthen Vans, near the western limit of the Black Mountain range. Thence, climbing over their tops, loftier than Plinlimmon, you drop gradually down into

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Glamorganshire—seventy miles in all, if it is an inch. But the last stage does not concern us here, and, moreover, both its ranges bear distinctive names, nor is their seclusion of the same marked character.

This other great moorland solitude lays five counties under tribute, Montgomery, Cardigan, Radnor, Brecknock and Carmarthen. Only one regular highway crosses it, namely, that to Aberystwith over the foot of Plinlimmon. South of this there is nothing but two rough farm roads that a stout trap, drawn by a local horse or pony, may be seen adventuring once in a blue moon. Nor, as before mentioned, is there any inclusive name for this great block of mountains, though almost every hill and glen within it bears some Cymric designation, which often tells a tale of ancient strife; while there are camps upon many of the summits that speak of a yet older day when Irish invasions and expulsions played so great a part in the dim story of West Wales. There are brown streams tumbling everywhere in the narrow glens, and spouts of white water leaping or trailing down the worn, rocky breast of some mountain height. Within touch of its fringes, and occasionally thrust deeper up the twisting valleys, are the little whitewashed homesteads of sheep farmers, whose large flocks of the smaller mountain breed keep their respective ranges by the same instincts as control the Herdwicks on the stints of Cumberland and Westmorland; for the dry stone walls of North Wales have little place here. This region, too, was a favourite haunt of Murchison, the "Old Silurian," as he named the formation, being the oldest rocks in Britain, and among the oldest in the world.

Many rivers rise to the southward of Plinlimmon: the Towy, the Teify, and the Elan, the Ystwith, the Yrfon, the Doethea, the Dulas and the Claerwen are the chief among them. Birmingham, to be sure, has tapped this wild upland for its water supply and submerged, though not without some compensating scenic effect, perhaps the most beautiful of its opening glens, through which the Elan and the Claerwen rushed out to meet the Wye. But beyond the motor road

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that skirts these mountain-girdled lakes, whose beauties thousands of motorists every summer vainly imagine they can realise at twenty-five miles an hour, all is still silence. The mountains behind, right through to the low ground of Cardiganshire and northward to Plinlimmon, remain still inviolate: no stranger ever sets foot on them from any point of approach. A few energetic local anglers, who will face a long and toilsome walk, or an occasional country parson with a taste for nature, botany, or birds, may conceivably be encountered. For myself, in the course of years, I have never met a stranger among them, and I have tramped a good deal in these wilds at various times and at many points—sometimes with a rod, often without it, sometimes with a companion, but generally alone, a practice, however, not to be recommended; for, if disabled by a mishap, it might possibly prove worse than breaking one's neck outright.

This is the region well understood, indeed too well understood, by professional egg-collectors to be the innermost sanctuary of the greater birds of prey. For grouse are not sufficiently numerous to be taken seriously, the heather for one thing being too patchy, so there is practically no "keepering". Buzzards abound, ravens are fairly numerous; and, what is more, the kite, though in small numbers, survives here alone, I believe, in all England and Wales. A local Protection Society keeps an eye upon all this wild country, working through the assistance of the sheep farmers. For, if the tourist never finds his way here, this island witholds no secrets from the egg-fiend. The surface of the larger portion of this hill country is more or less boggy and clothed with coarse tussocky moor-grass—knee-high, and often more—which makes straightforward walking heavy work. It is interspersed, however, with stretches of harder turf, clean, and rocky, or clad with bracken, whortleberry plants, and occasionally gorse, while patches of heather make everywhere, in its season of bloom, bright spots amid the green and russet waste. The streams at times, quite curiously, cut deep troughs in the hard rock underlying the spongy bogs, while

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occasionally up in the shoulder of a hill some small lake or tarn finds an unexpected resting-place. Faint trails that evade the boggy tracts, or have discovered a tortuous course through them at Heaven knows what remote period—some of them, no doubt, old miners' tracks—cross the hills, and, though not trodden perhaps for generations, are still kept hard and crisp by the teeth of hungry sheep.

For all through these mountains lead, silver, copper, and even gold were worked in former days, dating back to the time of the Romans or even earlier. In the Plinlimmon district a little is being done in that way even still. Drovers, smugglers, friars, and pack horses had once to find their way through them from Cardiganshire to the outer world, and no doubt made use of many a trail, still visible in places or wholly obliterated. Peasants, too, had to find their way over them to distant market-towns, which capricious laws made the only ones available for sale or barter. But now in these elsewhere crowded days all is silence, but for the cry of moorland birds, the bleat of sheep, the fall of waters, the bark of a shepherd's dog. The surface of this whole country is, in my experience, unique, that is to say, the walkable bog which merely grips your heel and the quaking bog that will let you right through are both alike hidden beneath the same long tussocky moor grass and show no distinguishing mark over wide stretches that from a little distance appear so easy of transit. No familiarity with Irish, Scottish, or North Welsh wilds will help you here to select in advance a firm line of travel over either hillside or vale. You must take it as it comes, unless you know one of the regular trails. No horseman can ride these mountains off the trails, except the sheep farmer on his pony, who knows their intricacies. There is probably over the whole of them a smaller proportion of firm than soft ground, and the latter, though all of it but the actual quaking bogs will readily carry a man, will not bear the weight of a horse, of which fact I once had an extremely rough reminder, seeing that the particular animal in question went in up to the buckle of his girths and threatened to disappear

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altogether. If he had not been a beast of both years and discretion, he would, I feel sure, be there now. For the circumspection with which he gradually raised himself out abides with me still, though it is many years ago. Giraldus Cambrensis tells that in his day, the twelfth century, this waste of hills was called by the Welsh the mountains of Elynedd and by the Normans the Moruge. But, as a barrier and strategic feature both in peace and war, they mattered a great deal then. The earlier kings, the Henrys and the Edwards, knew a great deal more about them and about many other wild places than the modern Englishman with all his motors and railway trains; they *had* to.

All this country, these "mountains of Elynedd" and a good deal more besides lie finely spread out from either summit of Plinlimmon. For beyond their farthest bounds, upon the southern horizon, is a long line of upstanding shadowy mountains—from the Carmarthen Vans to the sharp peaks of the Brecon Beacons (*the Bannau Brecheiniog*), while the course of the Wye valley can be traced from height to height, with Radnor forest rising to the east of it, and the still higher and bolder shapes of the Black Mountains proper shutting out the vale of Usk.

Nor must one forget old Borrow, now that he has captured, if rather late in the day, the popular ear and achieved something of a cult to himself. As a small tribute to his belated fame, I have headed this chapter with his rather free translation of Lewis Glencothi's well known lines on Plinlimmon. Those who know Borrow's "Wild Wales," which to me has been a frequent source of entertainment for about a quarter of a century, will of course remember how he spent a Sunday on Plinlimmon, not without characteristic pricks of conscience that he ought to have been at church instead. When he gazed from its Cardigan peak, on a dreary November day, over the far-expanding solitudes to north, south and east, he made the remark to his guide that "it did not seem much of a place for society". The true Borrovian may treasure this, but on the whole I think my old guide-book's allusion to "the

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Voluptuary's point of view" is the more unconsciously humorous. Borrow made his way up to the mountain from the inn at the Devil's Bridge on the Cardiganshire side, though, as already hinted, with a guilty conscience; for, on consulting his pocket almanac in the morning, he had been surprised to find it was Sunday. Now, however absent-minded the traveller, it seems incredible that in the very presence of the calm that settles down on a Welsh Sabbath any reference to a pocket calendar should be necessary, above all, in the case of such a stout evangelical as our author. He told the rustic whose services he had impressed as guide, that Plinlimmon was the third highest mountain in Wales, and Taffy promptly replied that he thought it must be the finest in the world, seeing the number of half-crowns he had earned in conducting strange gentlemen up it.

Borrow was shown in the course of this extraordinarily comprehensive day a tiny basin in the natal bog of the Severn, which his guide declared to be its fountain spring, whereat he piously bared his head and drank of it. This was after he had been conducted down the back of Plinlimmon-fawr to the little tarn which gives birth to the Rheidol, and had dutifully sampled these waters also and no doubt relished them more. I regret to say he describes this particular descent as fraught with perils and difficulties that could only have been present to the most exuberant imagination and come strangely from the pen of so courageous and adventurous a soul. A still earlier generation of travellers ran descriptively amuck on suchlike occasions. Defoe, for example, on ascending the big Cheviot, the smoothest and gentlest mountain in Great Britain, with several guides, threw himself on the ground in spasms of terror, and refused to budge an inch further till a lady and gentleman went cantering by him on horseback up the smooth slope and shamed him into making one more "supreme effort" to overcome his fears. But Borrow was not Defoe, who was a Cockney, nor yet of his day, nor, it must be added, does he approach his hysteria. If the truth must be told, the old man has, I fear, taken a more serious liberty with this

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Sabbath day's journey than any mere conversion of a hill-slope into a precipice. For he also descended by his own account and drank from the source of the Wye, having much to say at that notable spot, and then apparently climbed up the Arwystli shoulder and returned by the Tarenig, which, misunderstanding his henchman no doubt, he characteristically mis-writes the Frenig. The points of the compass followed by brooks and streams and incidentally by Borrow himself make dumbfoundering reading to any one acquainted with the mountain. But one feels rather grateful than otherwise to this unique individual for maintaining his originality in his facts as well as his opinions. Possibly the Borrovian compass may have been affected by the mineral underlying the mountain!

Having arrived at Eisteddfa-Curig, he demands of the Welshman its name and, on hearing it, informs his guide that it means a place where people sit down. Upon this, the other, agreeing to the obvious, spins a little yarn for Borrow's edification of how three men from different parts of Europe all met there and sat down together, poor St. Curig being nowhere. And so, taking note of all these things, the pair pursue their homeward road together till they come to the Castle Inn, nearly three miles down the Aberystwith road. Here Borrow orders an ample measure of ale for the two of them, over which they sit discussing the day's adventures. On parting, the simple Welshman blesses Borrow (having received a little extra tip) and wishes that all the English "Shentlemen" who utilised his services were like "His Honour," an expression, by the way, utterly foreign to the Welsh tongue. There was probably, however, nothing mercenary in this parting utterance, for the novel entertainment furnished by the master may well have provided the man with material for many a subsequent oration at the inn bar. Borrow in the meantime tramped homeward in the waning light to his quarters at the Devil's Bridge, six miles away, arriving there at six o'clock to enlarge on the delights of a good dinner awaiting a hungry man, washed down in this case no doubt by more cwrw and topped up with a bottle of port.

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It does not matter in the least that the achievement of this short November Sunday, as related by the then elderly author upon the last of his expeditions, is quite impossible. At any rate, I should not recommend any faithful Borrovian other than a youthful athlete in training to start on foot at ten o'clock on a November morning from the Devil's Bridge with the expectation of quaffing the infant rills of Severn, Wye, and Rheiddol, and getting back by sunset or anything like it to the cakes and ale of Castell Dyffryn Inn. The venture would put a sore strain on their faith if they looked at it that way. As a mere matter of curiosity, too, we might wonder precisely where and how this veteran compounded with his literary conscience, as regards his marvellous Sabbath day's journey, for this wasn't L'Avengro, but a Tour in Wales! But it is of no consequence whatever; I for one do not care a jot for its veracity, as I read the quaint delightful pilgrimage of this original immortal. His often disconcerting topography, his complacent and whimsical nomenclature, his tags of out-of-the-way Welsh lore, mixed up with sententious pronouncements on the common-places of Welsh history, are all in keeping. Nor does he ever worry himself beforehand about a line of country, but carries his no doubt astonished guides along with him, as if to dispense with all such cares. Thus he plods along with the "John Jones" of the moment, demanding the name of this place or of that. And when the sound of it stirs up some book-lore memory, he rounds upon the honest and bewildered rustic and overwhelms that ingenuous wight with unsuspected facts concerning his motherland. Borrow's cross-examination of Welsh peasants on the highway concerning the trifles of life in English, or his passages of arms in his English-Welsh with flabbergasted monoglots whose faces must have been a study, are among the gems of his Welsh tour, though it must be admitted that there are some pages of stuff that no one would dare to write, and from another pen no reader would tolerate. He would be a bold Evangelical, and indeed a bold heathen with a character to maintain, who in these degenerate days finished a book after the manner

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of Borrow's exit from wild Wales. The scene was Chepstow.

"I went to the Wye and drank of the waters of its mouth, even as sometimes before I had drunk of the waters of its source. Then returning to my inn I got my dinner, after which I called for a bottle of port, and, placing my feet against the sides of the grate, I passed the time drinking wine and singing Welsh songs till ten o'clock at night, when I paid my reckoning, amounting to something considerable. Then shouldering my satchel, I proceeded to the railroad station, where I purchased a first class ticket, and, esconcing myself in a comfortable carriage, was soon on the way to London."

My own first acquaintance with the top of Plinlimmon was made on a wild October day many years ago. It was a fierce and stormy month, but a comparative lull for a few morning hours tempted me up from Rhayader to the Eisteddfa-Curig, where about midday the elements once more became threatening. I am glad of it now, but I was by no means so then, as my companion had broken down and I had to find my way over the two miles of lonesome turbary and up the mountain face alone; a trifling matter in fine weather, but on that day the higher portions were opening and shutting in a headlong race of murky and tempestuous clouds. Making the most of the lucid intervals, I achieved in due course the Cardigan summit, recognisable by the cairns which possibly stood there when Glyndwr's standard was first unfurled upon the mountain top. These Plinlimmon cairns, by the way, are ascribed by the country folk to the devil, who is said to have spilled them, while carrying his material for the building of the Devil's Bridge. For some time, indeed, there was little else to be seen, as white flakes of whirling misty clouds shut out everything but a few yards of hard storm-beaten stone-littered peaty ground. It began to be not merely tedious but rather gruesome, when of a sudden the endless seeming procession of scurrying cloud passed away. The curtain lifted and disclosed a truly gorgeous scene, though awesome might perhaps be a more fitting epithet. It was not perhaps everybody's view,

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but it was mine and I shall never forget it. I dearly love to watch a mountain vista opening out to its farthest bounds like an angry sea, stern, sunless, and uncompromising. It was thus the "Mountains of Elenydd," as I looked southward, revealed themselves beneath that wild lowering October sky which raced from the Irish Sea in huge battalions of murky clouds that only just cleared their dark summits. Ridge upon ridge, notched here and there with cone-shaped and in the gloom peak-like crests, rolled away into the heart of South Wales. Sombre black shadows every one of them, all detail but their form and outline swallowed up in the gloom, a rigid contrast to the hurtling skies that skimmed their tops, and nowhere on this whole mountain waste one gleam of light. Drygan, distinguished by a mighty cairn, and the highest point of them all, is a little lower than Plinlimmon; but altitudes when they reach even this modest standard, haply become things of nought in our island clime in its fiercer moods. The solitude of this nameless wilderness moves one even under the sunshine. In such a temper as this, above all if you know its inner-secrets, it is infinitely more uplifting.

To the northward, however, a strange white light, in which the sun played no obvious part, exposed with singular clarity the broken russet waste that spread towards the Dovey, while Cader Idris and the Aran peaks lifted high their huge black shapes amid the gloom beyond. Little tarns, with subdued uncanny hue, flashed here and there, like patches of burnished metal, amid the waste. The Rheidol in a half flood streamed westward, looking like a bar of steel upon the brown bogs far below, and I fancied I could catch a flash or two of the Llyfni, which, rising near the Severn, bends this way before turning northward on its lovely pilgrimage to the Dovey. But the strangest effect of all, on this, to me always memorable day, was seaward. Here, and but a short distance away, a veil of dark mist, suspended, as it were, from the highest heavens, waved to and fro in the breeze, like a huge curtain of black laces. The intervening land was blotted out. But now and again, beyond and above the void, a white gleam

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appeared in sheeny shifting patches through the dark veil, expanding at times for a few brief moments into a wide stretch that glittered with a strange and almost silvery light amid the contrasting gloom, and which of course was the Irish Sea.

When the Severn leaves Plinlimmon and Blaen Hafren, it very soon doubles its size with the help of the Hore, leaving in the angle between them a mile or so of rolling sedge-clad bog, in which hundreds of big tree trunks are said to lie imbedded, an enduring testimony to the forests that once waved over so much of these now bare and barren mountains. To-day not a tree or bush rears its head upon the whole wide waste, save here and there a stunted mountain-ash tucked away in a gorge, its feet sprayed by the torrent, and blooming unseen but by the rock ousel on the heights above, who marks it down for his autumn feast of berries before departing for worlds unknown. Mighty little indeed of these mountain wastes would carry forests now. By what agency they were destroyed who shall say? But spongy bog or upland sterilised by the storms of a thousand years would intimidate, I think, the most enthusiastic of economists. And let those who love our British moorlands thank Heaven for that same. Mountains covered with oak, chestnut, maple, and the like have their high æsthetic merits for six months in the year, particularly if you have no desire to do anything but look at them from below. Who, however, but a purblind vandal would wish to obscure our British Highlands, that have no counterpart, so far as I know, in the wide world beneath a coat of monotonous evergreen; turn them, in short, into another edition of the Black Forest, or the Adirondacks! Who that knows the feel of the heather, the swish of the bracken, the spring of the crisp turf, and the glorious unobstructed sense of space and outlook, would give a "Thank you" to scramble up mountains through stuffy underbrush with a thick hood of leaves overhead, or follow a track laboriously hewn out for the purpose! And what of it when you get to the top? By good luck perhaps an upstanding crag,

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or an observatory, may provide a peep over miles of pine-tops. If you are off the beaten track there is the dubious alternative of climbing a tree to see even this much. This, however, is what some people apparently would like to make of Snowdonia and Lakeland if they could. A Mr. Robinson, I remember, used to write long letters to a leading weekly, saying "the *scenery* of our mountains would be so much improved," and, incidentally, that the view from Cader Idris made him shudder, or words to that effect. Such atrocities are, I trust, beyond the power of even the well-meaning economists. We are not sufficiently conscious till we have tried the other thing, as I have in many countries, of the priceless boon we possess in our open highlands, where crag, cataract and flashing burn, purple heather and emerald turf, sheeny bracken, russet moor grass, and golden gorse and a hundred other beauties of form, detail, and colouring, respond to every chasing cloud and sunny gleam. A fig for your pine-clad mountains and perennial sunshine! They suit the professional photographer exactly and he suits them.

The Severn enters the first fringe of civilisation at the outpost of Rhyd-y-benwch (the ford at the ridge end), a small homestead whose flocks range the heights of Gias, between whose fern-clad feet and the opposing steeps of the Biga mountain the river frets in a rocky gorge, leaping at one spot down a ledge over twenty feet high. A tributary comes tumbling down Nant Ricket, up which, with its back to Torrddu, is another lonely homestead. About here, too, a rough farm road begins to struggle towards the outer world. To "the hollows of Biga" that famous poet Lewis Glyncothi chants his gratitude:—

> Hiding in the heather of Cwm Biga,
> I was glad of the cliffs' green brush-wood.

This was after the defeat of his patron Jasper Tudor at Mortimer's Cross, and the bard, who had probably escaped from the field, went in fear of his enemies. No man more fully appreciated good quarters and high living or would have

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felt more inconvenienced, we may be sure, by such an untoward emergency.

At Rhyd-yr-onen (the ford of the ash-trees), the next farm below Glyn-Hafren, the long winding glen, so beautifully diversified in form and features, that carries the river to Llanidloes, may be said properly to begin. No English is spoken at Rhyd-yr-onen, but henceforward the speech of the valley is mainly bilingual, one of those curiously abrupt changes common enough all over Wales and for reasons sufficiently obvious. This is a charmingly-placed and picturesque little homestead, snuggling under the shade of tall trees, with the Hafren surging by its very threshold. Just below are more cascades, which, as seen from the rough roadway edging high above round a stiff hill shoulder of heather and fern, flash finely amid the foreground of deep bosky glen, backed by the wild mountains we have now finally parted from. Lush hedges now begin to lace the steep hill-sides, that spring sharply from the little river's fretting course, with a network of green pasture and meadow, chequered betimes with the glow of a ripening oat-field or the ruddy interlude of a still incipient root crop. Little white-washed homesteads, too, begin to blink in the valley or on the slopes through sheltering belts of larch, while woods of oak break at intervals the steep green pastures or crown the nearer hills. Now and again some ragged common of gorse, heather or bracken, in the full radiancy of a notably radiant year, sweeps up, still untamed, from the river to the hill-top, breaking for a brief interval the trammels of the plough, the scythe, and the hedgerow. Uplifted against the sky to the southward flares the long crimson mantle of heather that clothes the high ridge between the Bidno valley and Glyn-Hafren.

A large farm and group of cottages some four miles short of Llanidloes bears the name of "The Old Hall," or Neuadd Hên, near which, embowered in foliage, is the beautiful little cataract some thirty feet high, of Craig-y-llo. The Ingrams were squires up here and Lords of Glyn-Hafren in the old

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roystering days. But they roystered themselves out of their patrimony nearly a hundred years ago, though the last Ingram of Glyn-Hafren fought in many actions under Nelson and long survived the passing of the family acres. In old days, too, there used to be several small woollen mills in the valley. The concentration, however, of the flannel and woollen industry under modern conditions at Llanidloes and Newtown has extinguished all but one or two of them, the produce of which spread out in their snowy whiteness to dry on a hill-side might well, from afar off, puzzle a stranger descending the valley. The last short stretch of the Hafren, as it runs down to Llanidloes to assume altogether another character and a more famous name, is beautified by the woodland associated with one or two country houses; while the road above it proceeds towards the little town through a long avenue of beautiful and stately timber. The Dulas (the dark blue water), just united with the Tylwch, here joins the Hafren, which in now greater volume skirts the stretch of level road before we cross the Upper bridge into Llanidloes. The latter turns its back upon the still rocky and fretting river, which upon one side washes the rear of houses and mills, old and new, and on the other chafes upon a sylvan, woody shore. Half a mile lower down, having in the meantime taken to its arms the lusty Clywedog, it races under the many-arched bridge at the foot of the town, a full fledged stream of ample breadth and a more staid demeanour, as befits the actual start in life of the greatest of British rivers.

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CHAPTER II

LLANIDLOES TO CAERSWS

I WISH there were space to follow up the Clwedog towards its fountain springs, for it is as long as the Hafren and no less beautiful. Indeed, the latter may possibly have to thank the timely arrival of the Dulas and the Tylwch for its supremacy. Otherwise, the mysterious arbiter of the sources of rivers might perhaps have turned up the Clwedog, to the loss of his eldest daughter to Old Plinlimmon and of all the pretty lore concerning his illustrious fatherhood. Our business here is with the Severn; but no convention shall prohibit us from touching upon its tributaries, for are they not its very life blood, its component parts? For myself, I never look upon a river and think of its long journey from its distant birth-place as that of a single artery. I like to fancy the water of its confluents contributing each its share to the loud clamour upon the rocks or the soft melodies upon the gravel, and even idly to dream that familiar brooks in some remote Arcadia are still passing by, their spirit unlike their waters unmerged in the greater flood.

Now, no one staying at Lanidloes, as I trust some of my readers may do before they die, should fail to explore the valley of the Clwedog, which is to say, the "sonorous" or "resounding," a truly felicitous designation. It runs almost parallel with the Hafren and is very similar in character. But it pushes a trifle sooner into the wild country and twists among the hills with quite remarkable gyrations. It bends away, too, to the north-west after a short run parallel with the Hafren, and eventually finds its source in a tiny tarn some four miles north of Plinlimmon. By missing the lower few

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miles the traveller who is dependent on wheels can take the Trefeglwys road from Llanidloes and strike another of inferior but, I believe, passable quality, which branches off near the Van mine and thence traverses a wild and beautiful country to Llanbrynmair on the main Cambrian railroad between Welshpool and the seacoast. It achieves an elevation of some 1,400 feet, but keeps more or less in view of the Upper valley of the Clwedog and a great many other scenes both grand and beautiful that must not concern us here. Among them, however, may be mentioned the waterfall of Fridd-fawr, over a hundred feet in height. But the road, speaking broadly, cuts across the north-east angle of the great wilderness and, save for the Llanidloes-Aberystwith motor-track, is virtually the only one that penetrates it at all; though, as I have before mentioned, the North-Wales tourist in the Dovey valley has opportunities, and possibly uses them, of exploring all this northern section.

Some two miles up the Clwedog, on a hill-top, stands the interesting little Tudor manor-house of Glyn, this long time used as a farmhouse and now owned by the occupant. It was notable in former days as the ancient seat of the Glynnes of Glyn-Clwedog or "Glynnes of the Glyn". Just a century ago it passed through a female to the Myttons of Pen-y-lan, a stock by common tradition notorious for heady performances in their immediate orbit. So remote a situation was, to be sure, not favourable to a conventional demeanour, and, moreover, the Wales of the eighteenth century had not yet fallen under the sombre spell of the pulpit and the politician, and the peasantry, I fancy, played up to the pranks of their landlords, men usually of small estate, narrow outlook, exuberant habit, and fiery temper. That the Glynnes of the Glyn indulged in wild work is a strong tradition around Llanidloes; but I could find nothing definite with which to illuminate in fancy the old oak-panelled chambers of their feudal stronghold, as I wandered through them. Quite fortuitously, however, a friend in another part of the county much concerned with its lore, but not, I think, cognisant of

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ON THE CLWEDOG

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the Clwedog tradition, was recently looking over the depositions taken before the Newtown magistrates during the first half of the eighteenth century. From these, it appears that the Glynne who was reigning in Glyn Clwedog about the year 1720 was on a certain occasion, according to his habit, carousing in the particular tavern that he patronised in Llanidloes. Here he sat, surrounded by his humbler and doubtless sycophantic friends, all engaged in the same jovial game, when of a sudden a stranger entered, and without being bidden, took a seat in the charmed circle. This was intolerable. A stranger in Llanidloes two hundred years ago ought assuredly to have known better! Perhaps he was from South Wales or, worse still, an Englishman! It appears, however, that on being peremptorily ordered to make himself scarce by this monarch of the glen, he had the effrontery to claim his right of entry to a public chamber and curtly refused. Upon this, Glynne of the Glyn, according to the depositions, drew his sword, and without more ado, ran the hapless stranger through the body. There is no sequel to this, nor any evidence on record that this autocrat of the Clwedog was put to the least inconvenience on account of his exploit.

Above the Glyn the Clwedog winds a tortuous glittering course around the base of bold upstanding hills, many of whose summits are crowned with one or other of that chain of prehistoric camps which stretches from the Roman station of Caersws, of which anon, towards Plinlimmon. It is beneath Dinas that the river describes its most eccentric loop, only saved at one point by what seems a mere trifling bank from bursting through and pouring down under the foot of the Van mountain to Trefyglwys and Caersws. Bryntail and the Gaer, too, rise almost perpendicularly from narrow valleys furrowed deep by the age-long action of the fretting stream. From all of these, Pen-y-clun, Dinas the largest, and Crowlwm, whose broken ramparts are still bare of turf, there are noble outlooks: westward up the Clwedog into the Plinlimmon solitude, northward to Cader-Idris, the Arans and Arenig-fawr,

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and eastward far down the rich Severn valley to the Breidden with the fine upstanding and wide-spreading Kerry moors upon the right and the mountain groups of Brecon, dim-shadowed but sharp-outlined, upon the southern verge of sight. From Pen-y-clun one looks right across to the cone-shaped Van mountain, notable for the Van lead mine that has made and unmade many fortunes, and some forty or fifty years ago was in the height of its glory. In the hollow between, the Ceryst (the swift-flowing) races down from its infant springs to Trefyglwys and the Vale of Tarranan.

This Van mine is, I think, the only concern of any size now active in all these mountains. Vast sums of money, however, have been ventured and lost in former days in all parts of their lonesome wilds. The grass-grown dump-heap, or the still visible scar of the prospector's pick, testifies even yet in many a secluded glen to the optimism and sometimes worse of the men of old. A Cornishman named Browne lost several fortunes in the Van mine and elsewhere in these hills, but in old age and poverty is said to have declared that, given his life and his money over again, he would utilise both in the same feverish manner, so stimulating had he found it. Perched upon any of these intrenched hill-tops, round whose base the sparkling stream twines in snake-like fashion, it is inevitable that one's thoughts should turn to that last stand made by the Silurian Britons under Caradoc against the Romans, described but all too briefly by Tacitus. For the two sites which claim the honour of that famous action in which the Roman infantry of Astorius stormed the intrenched heights where the British made their desperate and final resistance, are both in sight, namely, Cefn Carnedd, comparatively near, and the Breidden, on the far horizon. Caersws, the Roman station, which doubtless arose as the aftermath of this fierce campaign, and of which anon, is easily visible between the two competing heights. Indeed, all these hill-top camps, clustering as they do together, had probably a share in that epoch-making struggle.

This is a Welsh-speaking district and Llanidloes is a Welsh-

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speaking town, though nearly everyone is more or less bilingual. Rhayader, on the other hand, which stands to the Upper Wye valley as Llanidloes does to that of the Severn, can no longer either speak or understand Welsh and the language has been pushed up the Wye on to the very flanks of Plinlimmon—an interesting contrast between two neighbouring and parallel villages. The old superstitions still linger in the nooks and corners of these mountains, though the influence of the chapel has in the main been strongly subversive of this sort of thing, and it has even done something towards crushing out the legend, story, and romance of the past, to say nothing of such credible history as most races treasure. Curiously enough, by far the most active element among those who have striven for the preservation of the past in all senses, are the clergy of the Established Church, who are denounced as anti-national because they represent the creed of their ancestors; one that, in comparison at any rate with the sectarian departures of yesterday and the day before, is in perfect harmony with the glorious old buildings erected by the Welshmen of old. I do not want to talk politics here; but this is a matter of literary interest entirely apart from politics, to me at any rate. As few outsiders have had more occasion to put the matter to a practical test, and that, too, from one end of Wales to the other, I may be allowed perhaps to note the curious fact that the men who know—the men who write most and best about old Wales—are in at least three cases out of four Churchmen and, as often as not, clergymen. The politician and professional patriot in or out of Parliament, with a few exceptions, knows nothing at all of his country's past but the tags he gathers from pamphlets bearing on current politics that he is obliged to cram up. To do him justice, however, he often cherishes ideals, sound or otherwise, about his country's future.

There is a quite common impression that, when a stranger goes into a country-side in quest of surviving superstitions and the like, the peasant, not merely opens his mind to him but even improves the occasion according to the measure of his inventive powers. As a matter of fact, the very opposite is

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the case, so far at any rate as Wales is concerned. The rustic there nearly always begins by denying the soft impeachment if this or that belief is cautiously hinted at and is apt to assume a rigidly sceptical attitude. You must win a little of his confidence and then, peradventure, you may find that gradually and reluctantly, shamed-facedly perhaps, revelations will be forthcoming. He is not merely ashamed, from the theocratic atmosphere he breathes, to profess belief in the supernatural, but he is not over-anxious even to talk about it lest he should be tempted into a betrayal of the weakness within him.

A few years ago I went up into these mountains with a Welsh parson, well known both as a rural parish priest and as a man of letters, who was curious to learn something of the attitude towards these things at the head of the glens where the vernacular still survived and made for isolation. We put up at a little inn not far from Plinlimmon, which we had to ourselves, the season being long past. So we were able to offer a fireside hospitality much more effective for promoting the confidences of a mountain farmer than the top bar of a roadside gate. My friend, being well known by name and, moreover, from Cardiganshire—that inner sanctuary of everything weird and mystic in Welsh folk-lore—soon stripped the flimsy cloak of orthodox scepticism from the ancients of Plinlimmon. The sorcerers and charmers that by repute still lurked among these mountains were our more particular objects of interest, and one by one were dragged into the light under the soothing influences of tobacco and a cheerful fireside. For the two professions, be it noted, are distinct, like those, for example, of barristers and solicitors. We were referred among other confidences to a particular farmhouse where the evil eye, though in declining strength, together with more useful magic arts, remained with a third generation, and many instances of strange doings were related. I was passing within sight of the house only the other day and remarked to a road-mender, with a proper assumption of levity: "There used to be sorcerers in that house some years ago". My

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well-meant flippancy was obviously misplaced, for, to my surprise—and in a solemn tone that conveyed rebuke—he replied: "Yes, yes, and they are there still". One weather-beaten old farmer vividly described how quite recently a neighbour's horses had suddenly lost the use of their legs from the malignant over-looking of this or some other "cwtserwr". It was not till an antidote in the shape of an enigmatic scrawl on a piece of paper had been procured from the same magician and waved over the stricken animals that they recovered, which they did with incredible dispatch. We were also told the wondrous tale of a young matron, who, having been given over for a dropsy by the doctors, had been cured by a local wizard, and had since given birth to ten children. Many other marvels were related, which obviously disturbed the proper scepticism which should distinguish the faithful.

Of the more grizzly and dramatic horrors which formerly held in awe the people of these mountains, it would be more difficult to say anything worth noting. Who shall say whether the Cwn Annwn (the dogs of Hell) or Cwn Ybir (the dogs of the sky) are ever seen hunting freshly departed souls over the summits of the Plinlimmon mountains? Or whether the Canwyl corph (corpse candle) still flickers along dark lanes, foreboding death, or worse still, if the "Cyhyraeth," that horrible female spectre, all worm-eaten from the grave, whose society must have been almost worse than the coming doom it signified, continues to terrify the night wanderer? All these things may, or may not, retain some shreds of reality for the simple and defy the exorcism of the pulpit and the Sunday school. But those who perchance walk the mountain paths, or cross the churchyard fearfully of nights, do not give themselves away nowadays. Their betters might welcome an uncanny experience as a social asset when they get over their fright. But the rustic no longer, I fancy, discusses the mysteries of the night over a peat fire, however he may inwardly respect them; but he reads some organ of the denomination to which he belongs, by an oil-lamp, or perhaps the biography of a deceased local minister—Y Parch

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John Jones by Y Parch Evan Roberts—published in boards at 2/6. And, if this will not scare the demons from the door, I should like to know what would. To be serious, however, secular education has made enormous strides in Wales. Ambition is ripe, brains are nimble; the University and the intermediate schools have done much. A generation is undoubtedly growing up among the Free Churches that will not only take a wider outlook of things in general, but realise that the history of their own country does not begin with Howell Harris and Charles of Bala. The limitations which only see a papist in a fourteenth century Abbot, relics of superstition in the Gothic arches of a ruined monastery, and a mere man of blood in a mediæval prince, are being slowly effaced. The pageants of the past in a land so gloriously fashioned by nature to illuminate them will again surely come into their own.

The charm of Llanidloes in regard to situation is beyond dispute. Washed by a pellucid and rushing river; fringed by woodlands of great beauty upon either side; girdled by moors and mountains that afford an unlimited field for picturesque adventure; and looking down a green, luxuriant vale that is traversed by a not too obtrusive railroad and an excellent highway—what more could one ask for? The town contains about two thousand souls, and long may it remain at that serviceable, modest figure.

The old flannel industry still flourishes within the reasonable limits one would expect, and one or two other concerns keep pace with it. Thousands of sheep and cattle, however, change hands yearly in its market-place, while its dressed mutton and lamb from the Plinlimmon mountains are known all over England. Its first markets were instituted with its earliest charter, granted by Owen ap Griffith ap Gwenwynwyn, Prince of Powys, in 1286. The town is cruciform, if the term be permissible, and of itself in no way remarkable. Nearly a century ago a traveller heartily condemns it for its "disreputable old town hall and mean, old dwellings," redeemed in his eyes by the "neat houses of red brick" recently erected.

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Taste has changed. Most of us now hold that red brick among the Welsh mountains strikes a sadly incongruous note; while many again would now find the most picturesque portion of Llanidloes in the narrow twisting lanes and old, low-pitched houses, so scorned by our Georgian traveller. All of us, including the natives, would most assuredly rate the old, half-timbered market-hall at the cross of the streets as the gem of the place, saving always the fine old church, standing in its ample and leafy graveyard above the Severn.

Llanidloes owes its origin and its name, like so many of its neighbours, to a sixth century missioner, in this case St. Idloes, who founded a church here. He is mentioned with approval in the Welsh triads as enunciating an aphorism, though of so commonplace a nature that it would be unfair to his memory to set it down here. I do not know anything more about him but that his eye for a building site was obviously sound. The date of the present church is probably Norman, as shown by its squat and massive tower. Of the interior, however, the Arcade which divides the Nave from the only aisle and a beautiful oak roof are the chief features of interest. For they are said to have been brought from the abbey of Cwm-Hir which was destroyed by Glyndwr and is now a ruin among the Radnor hills, eight miles away, and much visited from Llandrindod Wells. The arches are pointed and deeply moulded, resting on clustered columns and triple shafts with floriated capitals. Upon the hammerheads of the oak roof are large figures of angels bearing shields which form a singular procession as seen from the bottom of the aisle. Just behind the churchyard the Severn, retiring from its brief contact with the older part of the town, sports upon its rocky bed between spreading foliage, and a pretty glimpse is disclosed up the leafy glen of the Clwedog, which here makes its entry.

Llanidloes has boasted a mayor since the thirteenth century, most towns of that day having been governed by a bailiff. There is a humorous old custom, too, still in force in some of the neighbouring villages of electing what is known as a "Mock Mayor" on the same day in November as marks

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that solemn function in the towns and boroughs of England and Wales. The election is quite capricious and has usually a waggish significance. Two or three leading men, over a pint of ale at the village inn, or more decorously over the counter of the village shop, decide who is to have the honour, which carries with it, however, neither dignity nor weight nor obligations. In fact, the election, or rather nomination, for there is no voting unless in jest, would lose its whole point if a man of ordinary authority were placed in office. The idea is to put up some individual who will provide a whiff of mild amusement whenever there is an opportunity of addressing him as Mr. Mayor. The more incongruous his personality and occupation, the greater the qualification. His only civic duty during the year of office is to stand treat to everybody present on the occasion when he is first saluted as mayor, which is generally the first intimation he has of his promotion. A taciturn shepherd from away back in the hills, who rarely comes to the village, a jovial irresponsible loafer, whose means of existence is a mystery, the walking postman who will be good-humouredly chaffed on his elevation at every cottage and farmhouse on his round—of such are the mock mayors whose appointment causes a little harmless mirth in rustic circles, and the more so as the joke is kept up in serio-comic fashion throughout the year. Should the honour fall on a hyper-sensitive soul, he avoids his fellow-men as much as possible or takes to the hills during his term of office! A few years ago the "Mayor of Llangurig," a small hamlet, appeared in the list of new mayors which we all know fills a column or two of every paper in England and Wales on 10th November. Llangurig had an extra laugh at its annual joke that year, and most of Wales knew enough to join in it. I cannot say how many villages enjoy this mild and harmless form of pleasantry, but it is an old and cherished custom in two or three of them at any rate.

I have said nothing as yet about the fishing in this Upper Severn and its tributaries; but it will, I trust, be patent to every reader of ordinary country habit that the streams which have figured on these pages either are, or ought to be,

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full of trout, and nature beyond a doubt thus endowed them bountifully. The Upper Wye for some miles above and below Llangurig, I can affirm with some reason, is a quite admirable trout stream, and there is nothing whatever to prevent the Severn and the Clwedog and their tributary burns from being just as good, except the fact that Llanidloes sits astride of them, which seems a hard saying. Llanidloes, however, assures me, through the mouth of its responsible spokesmen, that it has reformed in this particular, and that it has now some thirty miles of more or less open trout water with a reasonable stock of fish. I can answer for the mileage and that it is as pretty a variety of water as the brook fisherman need wish to cast a line upon. Nor have I any reason to doubt the optimism of the Llanidloes patriots, who really have the matter at heart. As a frequenter of Welsh waters for much of a lifetime, it would be impossible for me to be unfamiliar with the sinister reputation of Llanidloes in the past. One might aptly paraphrase the ancient Welsh triads, in which all facts moral and physical were embodied in triplets, and bring them up to date. "There are three notorious fish poaching places in Wales, Dinas Mawddwy on the Dovey, Llanidloes on Severn, and Rhayader on Wye." Heaven knows this does not exhaust the list. But these three unquestionably stood out till recently at any rate, as if to justify the favourite numeral of the ancient bards. The first and the last expended their main energies on the nobler fish. Llanidloes, not being so favourably placed for fresh run salmon, took it out on the trout. This at any rate was a reputation it achieved throughout the length and breadth of a dozen or more counties. Rhayader falls, up which a thousand salmon are sometimes seen to leap in a day by those deputed to take tally of them, has probably been the scene of more savage fish poaching encounters, and of more poaching that no one durst encounter, than any spot in Great Britain. But Rhayader too has practically reformed. The stony shores of the Dovey about Dinas Mawddwy and Mallwyd have run it in the past pretty close, but whether a

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truce has been patched up there also I do not know, for it is near the great slate quarries.

As already noted, I am assured that Llanidloes has reformed and incidentally that the old gang, mainly loafers, who used to scoop out the trout wholesale from all the head waters of the Severn by nefarious means and with impunity, have practically died out. Now that Llanidloes has begun to attract visitors, and would like to attract a good many more, it has arrived at the tardy conclusion that men who destroy fish by nefarious means are public enemies, not merely the enemies of this or that landowner, to be treated with the utmost leniency when caught red-handed, as has been too much the custom hitherto in Wales. Moreover, improved education has done a good deal. Men who are too lazy to make an honest living, and exist by depredations on streams that would furnish healthful sport to many worthy souls, are no longer something more than winked at. In England the suppression of these evil-doers would be a mere matter of course. To Englishmen the passive attitude of Welsh respectability to the river-raiders has always been a mystery, not to say an irritant. Llanidloes, however, has pulled itself together, formed an association for the protection of all such waters as are not private preserves, a movement which, with the help of the local anglers and the final extinction of the poaching stocks, should really prove a success. Fair fly-fishing by itself, unless compressed into a very brief stretch of water, never yet injured a mountain river. No angler of wide experience in this branch of trouting holds any other opinion. Unfortunately a superstition to the contrary prevails among the infinitely larger number of the ignorant and the half-instructed. Hundreds of miles of good water run practically to waste in this sense year after year, not merely through the territory of the frankly selfish and thoughtless, but often through that of well-meaning kindly persons, who do not or will not understand that rapid water trout are much too cunning and much too prolific to be seriously depleted by the fly alone.

There is a fair run of salmon up the Severn, though they

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do not rise to the fly, and in the spawning season the fish find their way far up the Hafren and Clwedog and into their tributaries. The sheep farmers, no doubt, according to immemorial custom, levy a certain toll on these ill-conditioned fish in the late autumn and kipper them for winter use. There is no accounting for tastes. But this sort of poaching, if such it can be termed, is much worse in theory than in practice. The toll thus taken counts for almost nothing against the potential fish life deposited in the spawning grounds, a mere fraction of which, if hatched successfully would, I fancy, choke the river with fry. You would never convince a Welsh farmer that taking out what fish he wanted, for his own table, whether trout or salmon, is an offence of the same nature as killing pheasants or grouse without leave or licence. You might as well try to persuade a Kentucky editor, who had come out on top in a "little difficulty," that he was a murderer. Commercial fish poaching is another matter and arose only with modern facilities of transportation. The hill farmer feels under no obligation to the folks at the remote estuaries, who ultimately net the fish bred among his pastures. He does not see why the folks lower down the river should have all the fish and all the fun, and, if he feels like it, he helps himself to what he wants, which after all is not very much. This is mere human nature. What is more curious as characteristic of the Welshman is that should a great row be made, extra watchers and so forth put on, this, instead of stopping his undoubtedly illegal practices, stirs him up to poaching for its own sake, with the result that he goes upon the warpath, joining hands perhaps with the more or less professional poachers. And then bailiffs are no use at all! Nothing short of a regiment of soldiers would be of any avail.

Indeed, the attitude of the hill Welshman towards trout and salmon is a thing of itself, with a subtle but marked difference from that of his contemporaries in England, who may be poachers but recognise the fact that they are law-breakers. The Welshman knows he is a law-breaker, but something or other within him, inherited from a bygone

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age, I think, prevents him from accepting the fact that the fish laws are anything but a modern imposition. He may not phrase it precisely thus. But he really believes in his heart that he has a traditional and inalienable right to his share of the fish. For, as regards feathered game and its rights, his ideas are normal and like those of other Britons. Englishmen concerned with Welsh fisheries do not generally understand this peculiarity. They merely damn the Welshman up hill and down dale as an incorrigible fish-poacher, for which they can hardly be blamed. But they do not understand the situation in the least till a long experience has taught them and they have made things much worse by repressive methods of a kind which would be perfectly successful on the Exe, the Wharfe, or the Coquet. The more comprehending know that a sort of unspoken but well-understood compromise is almost necessary in Wales—that is, in most parts of Wales. The river conservators, for instance, may not proclaim the fact, but they know perfectly well that what may be called a merely domestic toll on the breeding fish in the upper waters makes no sensible difference and would be virtually impossible to prevent. They also realise that, while a reasonable amount of watching is not resented by the natives, an extra display of force is apt to provoke intense antagonism, and drive a lot of otherwise harmless folk into active poaching for the mere devilment of it. I have myself a theory that this peculiar characteristic comes down unbeknown from ancient times. The Normans, as every one knows, enforced the sternest code of game laws upon the English people and drove the fact that their infraction was a criminal act deep into their souls. Now, Wales was not thoroughly conquered till two hundred years later. The Welsh princes, to be sure, had elaborate game laws, while the salmon weirs were definite assets to property. But game was not the exclusive and sacred thing the Normans made of it in England, and even after the conquest of Wales, the Welsh aristocracy, with their easier attitude in such matters and semi-tribal feelings, remained in possession of most of the country. This, I believe, to be the reason of the sympathy, often, as it

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seems, a suicidal sympathy, with fish-poaching throughout most of the Principality.

Llanidloes, like its neighbour Rhayader, had some reputation for turbulence in former days. In the Rebecca and Chartist riots it took a prominent part for its size. Perhaps that is the reason why some of the earliest evangelising efforts to lighten the darkness of Georgian Wales were made here. The natives point with pride to a small house high up the Clwedog as the first Sunday school in the Principality. But Llanidloes is excellently well behaved nowadays, and has, furthermore, an admirable intermediate school, a modern development of its ancient Grammar school. Wesley preached here on a big stone that stands at the corner of the old market hall. Nor is there anything surprising in this, since his brother married a Gwynne of Garth, not very far away. The letters that the younger Wesley wrote to his brother upon the subject of his engagement and marriage are most curious reading. If memory serves me, he was profuse in his apologies for falling a victim to this lady's, or to any lady's charms, and addressed his but slightly senior relative and co-worker almost in the tone of a boy deferring to the opinion of a stern parent. So much for Llanidloes, as it concerns us here. No doubt the things that have happened in this secluded borough would fill many volumes and make a racy record. But they have mostly gone down into the grave with the Joneses, the Lloyds, and the Powells, the Evanses, the Williamses and the Pughs, the Robertses, Rhyses, and Thomases, whose bones moulder in the old green churchyard where the Severn, strictly as such, makes its first plunge into the world.

Hitherto we have trodden more or less on trackless wilds, for to see the Severn Hinterland properly and to feel the true spirit of Plinlimmon you must walk. Now, however, there is the alternative of a broad highway, following the river for many miles, with frequent glimpses at close quarters of its quiet willowy pools or spreading gravelly shallows. Flat green pastures spangled with golden ragwort and in the marshier spots bright with marigold, willow herb, and

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meadowsweet, spread across the narrow vale. Rich woods clothe the folding hillsides upon the further bank; while above the road the western ramparts of the Kerry wilds rear their lofty heads some fifteen hundred feet into the sky. White sheep spangle like daisies their high green tops. Deep combes and hollows enclose snugly sheltered homesteads, with their tributary tillage land squeezed in between the massive protruding shoulders of the hills. And out of them small brooks come leaping to gurgle beneath the road and end their brief course in the Severn. Here, too, in great patches towards the skyline, is the purple flare of heather; there again, acres and acres of golden gorse, or that wonderful mingling of both that Wales above all countries displays so lavishly. In October, when the heather is faded and the gorse, which in the west seems always ablaze from April to the turn of the leaf, has at length gone, these hills will put on another garb that to my thinking is hardly less beautiful. For when autumn rains have intensified the green of the mountain turf, and autumn frosts have turned the bracken into gold, and when over all this the October sunshine streams in slanting rays, the hills of Wales, more especially of Central and South Wales, can, to my thinking, be nowhere matched.

The height of these hill-tops, all bearing old Welsh names but sometimes collectively designated the Rhyd-Howel range, varies from fourteen hundred to two thousand feet. Hugging their woody base and giving frequent glimpses up their opening glens and commanding frequent views of their far away summits, a further charm of this valley road is the fine oaks that so often shade it and the old half-timbered homesteads or cottages that at intervals adorn its fringes. For some way below Llanidloes the vale is associated with one of those ancient families, which, though long ago wiped off the face of the earth in a territorial sense and their abiding places levelled with the ground, still grip the local memory and live in the common talk of the people. The Lloyds of Berthlwyd were snuffed out, or, to put it more elegantly, were bought out about 1780, by other Lloyds, who held on here for about

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ninety subsequent years and are represented now, I believe, by Lord Mostyn. These later Lloyds seem to have maintained about them something of the glamour of the old stock. Being of like name and of equal condition the continuity was perhaps natural enough. At any rate, like their predecessors they nominated the Mayors of Llanidloes, even up to 1835. The old Lloyds seemed to have braved it out till the last, for even in the decadence which preceded their fall, they drove to church in a coach drawn by six white oxen, though possibly the badness of the road may have had something to do with the size of the team. The Lloyds or Llwyds of Berthlwyd assumed their surname in the sixteenth century, when all Welshmen of any consideration were forced by circumstances to take one. Everyone knows the tradition that some impetus was given to so badly needed a reform by the refusal of the judges going on circuit to listen any longer to the interminable calling over of the lists of jurymen. For every one of these was then distinguished by his paternal ancestry for several generations and a certain number of "aps" were rather jealously exacted. The judges in short struck and refused any longer to listen to pedigrees instead of names. The length of the legal day, they declared, under the new organisation would not run to it. It was immaterial to him, said one judicial luminary, whether they used their own Christian name or that of their great-grandfather, so long as they confined themseles to one and stuck to it. This plan, at any rate, whatever its initiative, was adopted. Hence the origin of Welsh surnames and their bewildering tautology. Llwyd, of course, means "grey," hence "the elder" or "senior". Henry VIII is said to have suggested that the Welsh squires should adopt the names of their properties. It is a pity that they didn't. It would have immeasurably enriched our family nomenclature, if at times a little intimidating to a Saxon tongue. A mere handful did follow this suggestion, of which some half-dozen instances alone survive. But all up the Severn valley as far as Llanidloes there is a sprinkling of Anglo-Norman and even of Flemish

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names, for there seems to have been in the early times a small Flemish settlement at Llanidloes. Such names as Bebb, Dax, Hibblott, Ingram, Peat, Jardrell, Cound, are a few instances to the point of one or the other.

Away beyond the river, hidden from view in the lap of woody hills, lies the beautiful lake Llyn Ebyn, which drains into the Severn and is associated in the local mind with legends of impish children who effected an occasional exchange with the children of men to the consternation of their parents. In the village of Llandinam, which just here confronts the river, the upkeep and care of a great estate is obvious from the flourishing look of the houses. The old half-timbered Hall, which the Crewe-Reads inhabited for generations till shortly before they went the way of so many old families some forty years ago, stands near the road, and is relegated to humbler needs; "I. R. 1700" is carved over the porch. The Reads, who were from Carmarthenshire, purchased the property from the famous Lord Herbert of Chirbury in the middle of the seventeenth century. The newer mansion, set among woods upon the opposite hills, together with the estate, passed into the hands of Mr. Davies, one of the greatest captains of industry Wales has ever known, and now belongs to his grandson who, as Lord-Lieutenant of Montgomeryshire, is well-known for his support of Welsh institutions, and incidentally owner of no less than three packs of hounds, all kennelled here. The first-named from humble beginnings became a great contractor, built railroads all over the country, particularly in Wales, including the Cambrian, and was a model of integrity, shrewdness, and enterprise. A Nonconformist in creed and simple in habit to the end of his life, he died possessed of great wealth. A Conservative in politics, he sat for a Welsh constituency and was, in brief, a sort of Welsh Brassey. His statue stands at the end of the private bridge leading from the village to the modern Llandinam Hall. The church is old and interesting from the fact of having in ancient times possessed an abbot and been the mother church of Llanidloes. A memorable battle, too, was fought here in 1163. For Griffith, chief of Arwystli,

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NEAR LLANDINAM

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seems to have courted chastisement at the hands of the mighty Owen Gwynedd, King of North Wales, and from the brief account in the Welsh chronicle he and his men got even more of it than they expected.

A couple of miles further along an always picturesque road brings the traveller to Caersws and to the better known junction of Moat-Lane, where the Cambrian railroad from South Wales that we have been closely following meets the Cambrian main line and the heavy-laden trains bearing the tourist traffic from England to the Welsh coast. "Or does not meet it," the habitual tourist will very likely interpose! The language I have heard used anent this best-abused of lines within the last thirty years, if bottled up, would drive an engine over its entire system! It used to be said that it was barely safe for a director of the Cambrian to live in Wales. The railroad was the sport and target of the travelling public when I was younger, and even now the same familiar taunts are hurled at it, if somewhat less vociferously. But the old road still pursues its leisurely tortuous way, case-hardened to the scoffer, the grumbler, or the platform jester. Welshmen have by now grown accustomed to its demeanour. They inherited the Cambrian, so to speak, and have grown up with it. Only after some long absence, perhaps, is a native apt to relapse into the language which was chronic with his forbears and with more reason. But the tourist betimes still rages violently, partly I think because it is a tradition. I am quite sure the staff look upon it purely in that light—an attitude which often causes me some passing amusement while pacing the familiar platforms of Moat-Lane or Builth road, of Welshpool or Barmouth, knee deep as they must be in the past imprecations of the impatient and the ungodly. If I thought they cared twopence about it or paid any attention to the well-worn theme, I should hate to hear the stationmaster, guards, and porters of the old Cambrian thus girded at, even if they were all directors, instead of being merely servants doing their best with a line that has many inevitable disadvantages and for a company that has never had any spare capital. As for myself,

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I confess to a distinctly tender feeling for the Cambrian, associated as it is with so many happy days and years. For it is always passing through delightful scenes. I do not think there is a dull mile on the whole system. What matter if the trains do stop at every station; the local public have long got used to this, and the tourist, if he has a soul within him, ought to be thankful for such an opportunity of seeing something of such a country. But then he so often hasn't a soul within him, and, instead of displaying philosophic content, sends for the stationmaster, who is usually much too old a hand to be thus drawn; so the tourist blows off steam upon a guard or porter, who instantly assumes the far-away look that every Cambrian servant must acquire in mere self-defence. For the company have really made rather a noble struggle with difficulties not of their making. We ought to be grateful to them for carrying us in and round this rugged and beautiful portion of the island at so little profit to themselves. People don't look at it that way though, I am afraid. Still, I think, it would be quite safe nowadays for any, or all, of the directors to live in Wales, and I daresay they do.

Moat Lane Junction, which stands well out in the now widening valley, takes its name from a mote or Norman tump near by. Though so conspicuous a railway centre in the Upper Severn valley for the past half-century, it has an absent-minded feature about it that is without parallel, I am quite sure, in Great Britain. In all the years I have intermittently paced its airy platform, and not always with impatience, because of the fine panorama of hills and mountains that half encircle it, I never had occasion till quite recently to take to the road from that particular point. It was then I discovered the slightly disconcerting fact that there was no road or any approach whatever to the station from the surrounding country, which is closely fenced and reasonably populous, except a narrow cinder foot-path available for nothing more serviceable than a cycle. From the high road at the end of this, nearly half a mile away, the intending traveller or his henchman has nothing for it but to trundle his heavy baggage on a wheel

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barrow! On a stormy winter night the prospect of the heavily laden home-comer in the neighbourhood must be formidable indeed. For a station of three platforms and large buildings this constitutes, I should say, a record. It suggests the traditional house in which the architect forgot the staircase. The story of how road communication came to be overlooked, and the station fenced out from the world, beyond recovery at a normal expenditure, has slipped my memory. It is complicated and happened long ago. But there it is "whatever," lest any unsuspecting alien in trap or motor should take it into his head to pick up a train at the most important railway centre in the Upper Severn valley.

Caersws, a mile or two westward on the main line, is otherwise the chief rendezvous for the valleys that with their respective streams open out into this level stretch through which the Severn, reinforced by the Carno and Taranon, bends eastward towards England. It was, moreover, an important Roman centre, of which more must be said in the next chapter. In the meantime an alternative route here from Llanidloes is that which climbs the wooded hill to the west of the Severn, and thence, leaving a ridge between it and the river, descends by Trefeglwys to Caersws, about nine miles in all. The road is good, if for some distance rather perpendicular. But when you have accomplished the long slanting ascent up the rich wooded heights above the Severn valley, the open ridge beyond provides some reward for the toil—if any were needed—by a fine view over the woody and pastoral upland country on the hither side of the river. Most conspicuous of these hills, with a bare intrenched summit, is Cefn Carnedd, the spot which disputes the strong claims of the Breidden to be the scene of the last stand of Caractacus, and looks right down upon the Severn. This is a matter of contention, for I do not think the Herefordshire claim for Coxwell knoll on the little Teme is recognised except by Hereford men; whereas distinguished outsiders such as Freeman, Bloxham, Hartshorne, and other giants of the past, have crossed swords sharply on the two Montgomeryshire

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sites and a good deal of fur has flown. As the description by Tacitus fits both places, it is no wonder the rivalry is keen, and the champions of each are fully assured of the soundness of their respective contentions.

The cone-shaped Van mountain, too, opens out just here beyond the deep, narrow vale of the Ceryst, into which the road abruptly pitches, and thence by an easy grade, with Llyn Ebyr lying hidden in the woods to the right, descends to Trefeglwys. After leaving the village, as you draw near Caersws, the old, half-timbered mansion of Parc, now a farmhouse, lies back on the right, interesting not merely for itself, but as once the property of the Earl of Leicester, Queen Elizabeth's favourite and incidentally a particular scourge to Wales. The great Eliza herself kept a stud of brood mares here. Probably she inherited the property from her father and gave it to Leicester. For a former Lord Dudley appears to have sold his manors in Arwystli and Cyfeiliog to Henry VIII, and to have so exhausted his means that he was practically a pauper for the latter part of his life, being maintained at his various friends' houses and facetiously known as "Lord Quondam". The house is modernised outside, but the interior still retains an ancient appearance and gives probability to the tradition that it was actually built by Dudley, Earl of Leicester; while the farm buildings are obviously very old.

But Trefeglwys must by no means be thus passed over, not merely because it is an exceptionally pretty village, displaying many half-timbered cottages, and, furthermore, lies in a luxuriant vale of pasture and foliage through which the Taranon murmurs with now chastened voice, but from the fact that it is the native soil of Wilson, the great landscape painter of the early nineteenth century. His father was vicar here, and the small, half-timbered house where he lived is still standing. Being anxious to identify it, I interviewed the quite smart and intelligent young man who kept the village shop.

"Can you direct me," said I, "to the house where Wilson was born?"

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"Where *who* was born?" said the village merchant, with a touch of surprise that the query seemed hardly to warrant.

"Why, Wilson, of course; the great Wilson."

"My name is Wilson," said he.

"There is little doubt then but you must be a relative," I replied, "and I congratulate you."

The mystification depicted on my friend's face was unmistakable.

"I presume you know that your namesake, the famous artist, came from Trefeglwys."

"Never heard of him, sir," said he.

"Why, across the bank [all ridges under about 1500 feet are 'banks' on the Welsh border] in Llanidloes, Trefeglwys is chiefly known on that account," I rejoined, with, I fear, more than a little touch of hyperbole.

"Well, well, that is strange. I must look into it."

I then remembered the name of the house, which the grocer knew well, and at once directed me to it. As a matter of fact the Wilsons are an old local stock in this corner, immigrants of a byegone age, and the young man was doubtless a collateral relative of the prophet who had so little honour in his own parish, if he has plenty in his own country.

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CHAPTER III

CAERSWS TO MONTGOMERY

CAERSWS lies pleasantly on a luxuriant flat by the left bank of Severn, and the expiring melodies of mountain streams hurrying through it to their confluence with the parent river are all about it. Set in an amphitheatre of hills and mountains it suggests at once a spot where men would naturally forgather for purposes of commerce, government, or war. This sounds, perhaps, a bit grandiloquent to the holiday traveller, who may recall it as a little wayside station on the Cambrian railroad, where, after protracted burrowing in the narrow vale of the Severn, he breaks out into the open and gets a first real whiff of Welsh mountain air and a first glimpse of the higher mountain ranges that shut out the sea coast.

Caersws is to-day but a good-sized village, in the main modern, and more conspicuous now perhaps than at any time since the Middle Ages. Among the ancient topographers, to whom gratitude as well as convention demands acknowledgement, Leland always seems to me by far the best worth quoting—not because he is the first of them, nor by any means the most informing, but from the mere fact that his method, from its terseness, fantastic spelling, and quaint style, lifts him at times into an unconscious humorist of a high order. This is none the less edifying, as he was apparently the most prosaic of men and quite guiltless of an unnecessary word or a single flower of speech. None of these unintentional gems of description are expended on Caersws. He merely tells us that "In Arwystli is no praty town nor any market but Llanidloes. Yet at poor Caersws hath been a market and borough privileged." Caersws had, in fact, been once the seat

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of the Lords of Arwystli, and, much more to the point, the seat of administration in this part of the world during much of the long Roman occupation.

According to one Welsh bard, however (Dafydd Llwyd), of the numerous company who tuned their harps to exultant strains at the accession of Henry VII, that prince derived his origin from Seisyllt of Caersws-wen. But this is not very convincing, for we know all about the Tudors of Pen-y-mynydd in Anglesea, and that something grander had to be hunted up in the rear of that modest household, and how Henry's pedigree got on his brain and stimulated the bards, who were also the national heralds, to great genealogical exploits on behalf of the King's vanity. The Seisyllts, as a matter of fact, figure in history as a South Wales breed and are generally accepted as the Welsh ancestors of the Cecil family; hence their name.

The Roman station of Caersws may be usefully defined as a flat square, slightly raised above the level of the village which it immediately adjoins, and, being mainly meadow, little obstructed by buildings, the line of its ramparts is plain enough at many points. The camp is some 200 yards in diameter and the precise centre where the principal Roman buildings stood has been identified by excavation with the present site of a small farm-house, while the Cambrian railway station intrudes slightly upon its west flank. Though well known for all time as a Roman camp, it was reserved for a Welsh curate of antiquarian bent in the early fifties to begin the series of operations which have gradually revealed its importance. This public benefactor was the Rev. David Davies, who did a good deal of excavation and made many interesting discoveries. It was not till 1901 that the work was again taken up, and, though on a smaller scale, it synchronised with some building operations on the very edge of the camp, so that a great many relics were unearthed and formed the nucleus of a museum of Roman antiquities now attached to the village hall.

In 1909 the Liverpool committee for excavations and

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research under Professor Bosanquet, united with the Powysland club, resumed work on a larger scale, assisted by well-known experts. The result in brief was the successful locating of the prætorium, granary, military residences, hypocausts, baking ovens, streets, roads and wells. The eastern gate was also discovered, together with the road to Chester, to which great station Caersws no doubt was tributary. Traces of the wooden piles used in constructing the ramparts were also discovered and numbers of flat sandstones with which they had been faced. The civil settlement outside the south-eastern gate, now occupied by some new villas, was first discovered when these were building, and evidence was revealed of a considerable extramural population. From the bottom of a well within the camp which was found to be lined with wickerwork an oak washing-tub was extricated in excellent condition, an almost unique recovery, I believe, from a Roman camp. There were coins of various periods, weights, glass and bronze utensils and all kinds of pottery, from the native product to Samian ware, a varied collection which proved fairly conclusive that the founding of this station was associated with the first permanent invasion of Britain and the campaigns of A.D. 70 to 80 against the Silurians and Ordovices, which two nations had hereabouts their border-line.

Whatever interlude there may have been, it is also pretty certain that the station came again into permanent use during the later stages of the Roman occupation. A mere glance at it with any knowledge of Welsh topography suggests at once its strategic importance. Standing well clear of the foothills upon every side, and lifted just above the winter rage of the Severn, it commands every pass to the west. Cefn Carnedd, already mentioned, is but a mile away, the first of a long line of British posts, and a factor no doubt in the original war of conquest. This last is one of the strongest and largest British posts in Wales. Nearly oval in shape, it encloses about twenty-five acres, covering the entire summit of its lofty hill, and commands the valley of the Severn upon the right and that of the Carno and the Ceryst upon the left.

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A cross rampart divides the camp into two unequal divisions, the smaller and no doubt second defence being by nature the stronger, while on the more vulnerable side the works consist of no fewer than three trenches with their accompanying ramparts.

The lead deposits in the Plinlimmon country sufficiently account for that permanent occupation of the Upper Severn which the general features of the station at Caersws, and the various dates of coins found in it, indicate. At Cil-haul, a farm near Caersws, a vase full of coins of the time of Trajan was pawed up by a horse a few years ago, and it is worth noting how frequently it occurs that animals, sheep particularly, assist the antiquarian in this way.

Several of the snug-looking farm houses that lie just back from the river, along this portion of its course, are the beautiful old half-timbered mansions of former landowners. Indeed, throughout Montgomeryshire this style is much in evidence. Maesmore, near Moat-Lane, is a typical example, and amidst its timber and rich meadow land strikes a characteristic note in the view across the Severn valley from the northern side. Commissions of inquiry seem to have much concerned themselves in the sixteenth century with the lapsed dignities (and consequently tolls) of Caersws, the centre of the Lordship of Arwystli, and with Machynlleth, the capital of Cyfeiliog. Among the names of the chief witnesses examined, those of the two autocrats of the Severn sources appear, Glynne of Glyn-Clwedog and Ingram of Glyn-Hafren. It seems singularly appropriate that the Dr. David Rees, whose antiquarian zeal has contributed so much to promoting the recent excavations at Caersws and the interest aroused by them, should live actually upon the camp itself, or at any rate within a stone's throw of its ramparts. I was fortunate in inspecting the camp and hearing the story of the excavations under his guidance. This led to other enterprises further afield behind the doctor's ponies, which were both agreeable and profitable, for people fall sick in all kinds of pleasant and interesting places.

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We went to Llanwnog church on one occasion, a place notable for two possessions, the finest rood-screen in the whole of this country, and the grave of "Ceiriog Hughes," the greatest Welsh poet of the nineteenth century, who from the fact of his strong appeal to the popular mind is sometimes known as the "Burns of Wales". The church has some family or natal connection too with Gildas, the Brut historian. The famous screen of the rood-loft is of carved oak, admirable in treatment and spirited in design, though a good deal of detail has unfortunately been removed. The period is late Perpendicular, the Tudor rose showing among the profuse ornamentation. The rood-loft spans the entire width of the church and is reached by a stair of rude wooden steps, while the overlapping cornice is supported on wooden posts. Before the days when the church music was shifted up there, the epistles and gospels seem frequently to have been read from rood-lofts, as well as proclamations of various kinds.

A pre-Reformation stained window has been unfortunately almost obscured by a corner of the organ. It represents a standing figure of the patron saint in vestments, with an aureole encircling his head and a pastoral staff in his hand.

The grave of John Hughes, commonly known by his bardic name of "Ceiriog," on which beautiful Denbighshire stream he was born, lies to the south of the church. Perhaps the best way to secure the English reader's attention to a word or two on this to him assuredly unknown poet will be to proclaim him at once as the author of "Men of Harlech". Without underrating for a moment the merits of that most spirited song, so felicitously set to a stirring old Welsh air, I fancy that a Welshman would smile at Ceiriog's reputation being associated with it. It would be like labelling James Thomson, the author of "The Seasons," as the man who wrote "Rule Britannia". The poet was born in 1832, the son of a hill farmer, and spent his life as a railroad employee, the first and most prolific portion of it as a clerk in Manchester. In 1865 he returned to Wales as station-master, successively at Llanidloes, Towyn (Merionethshire), and finally here at

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Caersws, where he died in 1887. A man of pure mind, wide sympathies, and noble aspirations, his verse had, and still has, a wonderful vogue among the Welsh people. No other singer in the Welsh tongue of modern times has approached him. His lyrics were eagerly seized on by musicians like Brinley Richards, fifty of whose "Songs of Wales" were written by Ceiriog, who seems to have had a genius for suiting words to old airs. In 1863 he published a hundred songs, many of them for adaptation to Welsh airs. Manchester oddly enough seems to have inspired his muse to greater flights than his later sojourn among his native mountains. Though is that after all strange? We may well conceive an exile from the Berwyns in the murk of Manchester, if such he felt himself, soaring the higher for that touch of idealism which even the fairest familiar landscape borrows when concealed behind a curtain of city smoke. Ceiriog appears to have written himself out before he was forty, though he lived another twenty years amid the shunting of trains and the loading of trucks and the clamour of travellers. No poet could desire a fairer resting-place than this sunny bank beneath the old grey church tower of Llanwnog, built in with Roman coping-stones from Caersws camp and backed by its dark fringe of yews. The grave when I saw it was still covered with faded wreaths, as not long previously there had been some celebration to his memory. There is no village at Llanwnog, but hard by the church stands an old inn once known as the Talbot Arms, and a yet more ancient building with the date 1664 carved above the door.

The Carno comes hurrying down to the Severn at Caersws through the picturesque woods, homesteads, and hamlets which lie in the trough between the high bare hills that on both sides overlook this ancient passage towards the sea. The railroad climbs it for eight miles with an easy grade to top the watershed at Talerddig and thence to follow the torrent of the Tal down into the Dovey valley. Thousands of tourists must know this charming valley from the carriage window, but the high road, which keeps it more or less

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company, is quiet enough even in August. Rural life wags peacefully along its fringes and tributary lanes. Old inns, churches, hamlets, farms, with here and there a country house, are grouped along it within hearing of the Carno's boisterous and pellucid streams. Above, the high brows of the rock-ribbed hills, touched here and there with the flare of heather or the gleam of gorse, rise significant of the solitudes behind them. All this is the ancient manor, or Lordship, of Talerddig, of great interest to Welsh antiquaries; for, though of limited area, it seems to have had a territorial status of its own and acted as a buffer between the two large Powysian provinces of Arwystli and Cyfeiliog. Mediæval Powysland stretched wedge-shaped from the English marches to the sea, with its broader and more vulnerable end exposed to its great neighbour. And the Severn is essentially the river of Powysland, though the Dee and the Dovey are both within its bounds.

It is an old kingdom, this realm of Powys, watered by the Severn and her many tributaries—*Paradwys Cymry*, the Eden of Wales, the tribal land of the Ordovices, "the hammer men". It formed the southerly edge of that Brythonic race which reached all the way up to the Clyde and was cut in half for ever in the seventh century by the victories of Oswy of Northumbria, who met his death, as was quite fitting, at Oswestry in Powys. So Wales became roughly what we now know it; for the Brythons of Wales, north of the Severn developed what we call the Welsh tongue, and to this day, as every one knows, regard the language of the South, of the men descended from the Iberian-Goidelic tribes of the Silures and Dimetæ, with some contempt. That this is not suffered meekly by the others or justification admitted is no concern of ours here. Borrovians who do not know Wales, save perhaps as flitting tourists, which means most Borrovians, may nevertheless remember how that great man was mobbed by a crowd of Cardiganshire holiday-making rustics, who, not understanding his book-Welsh, insisted that he must be a North Welshman and flouted him terribly.

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The first authentic dynasty of Powys was founded by Cadell Ddyrullug (the black-fisted), swine-herd to King Beulli, who was fortunate enough to relieve the dire necessities of St. Germanus, when his master had banged the door upon him. Cadell, it is said, sacrificed the calf of his only cow to the saintly appetite, after which the great missionary called down fire from heaven, which consumed the stronghold of the wicked king on Moel Fenlli and Beulli himself within it. Then the swine-herd was exalted to the vacant throne, and with his seed reigned over Powysland for two hundred and fifty years. Cyngen, last of the Cadell dynasty, died on a pilgrimage to Rome in 885. Then Rhodri "the Great," his maternal nephew, who already reigned over Gwynedd and was one of those outstanding personages who at long intervals and for a brief space almost united Wales, in fear if not in love, annexed Powys. There was then a mix-up, not of provinces but of dynasties, and a fresh start would be incumbent on any writer rash enough to risk the tangled web of Welsh history on the forbearance of English readers. But there is a mysterious old upright stone in the glen leading up from the Dee to the Abbey of Valle-cruces in the lovely Vale of Llantysilio near Llangollen. This is the "pillar of Eliseg," visited by thousands of English travellers. It commemorates the tenth Prince of Powys in the line of Cadell and is of the ninth century, and till comparatively recent times plainly informed all those who chose to read it of that fact.

Near the banks of the Carno, and on the main high road, stand two old-fashioned inns. One of them of modest pretensions, the *Mytton Arms*, is decorated with the emblazoned shield of that ancient family, whose possessions have been widely distributed from the Border counties to the banks of the Dovey. For number and variety of *quarterings* their shield is, I believe, notable even in Wales. Faded and neglected it had been destined to decay in the inn yard. But my companion, being an antiquary and distressed at the disappearance of so suggestive a link with the past, made an appeal not to the purse of the publican but more equitably

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and efficiently to the pride of the family. So now in all the radiancy of fresh colouring the old badges of Mediæval Welsh nobles and Salopian Tudor magnates expose, one might fancy, a scornful face to the dust clouds of a petrol-driven generation.

Higher up, by Carno Church, is "*The Merchant of Allegro,*" a strange device, one would think, to find above the portals of an old coaching inn among the Welsh hills. This, however, is no mere wayside tavern, but a roomy, comfortable, bowery, old-fashioned house with pleasant gardens, resorted to, I believe, in the summer-time by a few discriminating souls from distant parts, at which I am not surprised. I had heard that in this neighbourhood, within a short drive of Caersws, there were preserved in an old farmhouse, some heads of wheat in still perfect condition though reaped in 1663, about which hung an extraordinary tale. My companion asked me if I should like to see them, as he knew the owner well and would drive me up there. So in due course we found ourselves inside the large farm-yard of Craig-bryn, for the moment in sole charge of the inevitable collies, a fact readily accounted for by the distant click of a self-binder. But even now the motive for this particular expedition might hardly seem urgent enough, unless the full tale be told.

Now it was in the year 1663, just after the Restoration, when the Puritan element among the clergy, as we all know, were expelled from the livings from which they themselves had displaced the old incumbents after the Civil War. Many good men on both sides had thus suffered during the frequent swing of the seventeenth century pendulum. So it fell out that the excellent divine, who throughout the Puritan regime had faithfully looked after the souls of the parish of Aberhafesp on the Severn below Caersws, found himself unceremoniously kicked out of house and home when the High Church folks came back into their own, and put out on the road with all his household effects. The only possession which by custom remained to him was a still growing wheat crop. When in due course it matured, no such wheat had ever been seen in Montgomeryshire. Every stem had a double head. It seemed, and indeed may well have done so, a miraculous interposition

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of the hand of God. The field is still known as Cai fendith (the field of the blessing). Many sympathetic neighbours plucked a few heads and treasured them away in memory of this astounding manifestation of the Lord's mercy. A bunch of them was still up here at Craig-bryn, and it was this, as already stated, that we came out for to see. A bright young daughter of the house hailed my friend and offered to hold the horse while we walked over a couple of pasture fields to where Mr. T., mounted on his reaper, was laying low his ripe wheat. It was a singularly inopportune moment. Interrupting harvest operations on, let us say, a two-man power farm is a serious business. However, Mr. T. declared with cheery candour, when he heard our business, that this was absolutely the only thing in the world that would have taken him off his machine on that precious afternoon; but for the exhibition of those treasured ears of grain all business had to give way. So he returned with us to the house, unlocked a desk in the parlour and produced a box with a glass cover under which, sure enough, were the double heads of wheat actually reaped in the year 1663, and plucked as a remembrance by the present owner's ancestors. They had remained continuously as relics in the family, who, it may be added, as owners and more recently as tenants have been seated at Craig-bryn for some three hundred years. About a century ago a few grains were planted and in due course grew and ripened, but the double head, as might be expected, was not reproduced.

The Severn basin in Montgomeryshire is strewn with the names of ancient battle-fields, as is only natural, having regard to its midway position between the ever-warring peoples of North and South Wales and its own position as the heart of Powysland. Carno witnessed two of these bloody encounters, one in 894, the other in 1079. Both were characteristic of the age. The first was the usual aftermath of every successful effort at a brief union of the three Welsh kingdoms. In this case it had been that of Howel-dda (the good), the South Welshman, the great law-maker whose elaborate and curious code may be read by anyone to-day.

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Already from his royal perch upon the high cliff of Dynevor in Ystrad Towy, the peaceful and sagacious ruler of both South Wales and Powys, the men of Gwynedd, a vacancy occurring, had paid him the surprising compliment (unique so far as I know) of offering him their blood-stained crown. But when the good Howel, an enthusiastic admirer and emulator of the great Alfred, died, after thirty years of peaceful prosperity commemorated by bards and chronicled as a halcyon age, the fat was once more in the fire. Owen, the son of Howel, who held South Wales in his own, and Powys in his wife's, right, was an easy-going person and was promptly dropped out of the loose Gwynedd succession by two fiery brothers of its own princely line—Jevan and Jago. These heady souls, after the manner of their kind, were not content even with this, but forthwith proceeded to fall upon the unoffending sons of Howel-dda, for Owen's brothers had been left that fatal partnership in his South Welsh kingdom, for which kingly fathers had such a fatuous weakness in ancient Wales. These, however, had not yet had time to fight among themselves. For the North Welsh pair fell upon the Southern brothers just here where the Carno joins the Severn, and sent Owen of Powys, at any rate, flying southward to his hereditary soil, to exchange, in short, the Severn of his wife for the Towy of his father, provided always his brothers would let him alone. Ambition seems to have been satisfied with the conquest of Powys, to the throne of which the Gwynedd victors called a friend of their own, though it seems that he was never actually crowned. Probably his patrons withheld the royal talaeth on good behaviour. But he was assuredly not that sort of man, if it had actually come to the push, which the death of his supporters prevented. I should not have pursued this tangled tale so far, but for the fact that this South Welsh nobleman, Gwaithvoed, titular king of Powys, was the only one of the eight Welsh princes summoned by the Saxon, Edgar, as their Suzerain, to make up that famous crew which rowed him on the river Dee, who sturdily refused thus to demean himself. "I

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cannot row a barge," said he, "and if I could I would not do so, whether for kings or vassal, except to save a life." So Edgar went down from Chester with a lop-sided crew of seven oars as we all know.

All this leaves no space to do much more than mention the second occasion in which the waters of Carno ran red. This was when Griffith, then Prince of Powys, after five years' fighting with Trahaern of Gwynedd, finally overturned him and annexed his honours. This also was a conflict in which all three realms were engaged, for Rhys ap Tudor of South Wales, the last Welsh prince to wear the title of king, took a forcible part. And so, after the fashion inimitably satirised by Peacock, in the "War Song of Dinas fawr":—

> We there in strife bewildering
> Spilt blood enough to swim in;
> We orphaned many children,
> And widowed many women.
> The eagles and the ravens
> We glutted with our foemen,
> The heroes and the cravens,
> The spearmen and the bowmen.

It is some six miles down the river from Caersws to Newtown. The through traveller, including the motorist, takes the main road, which follows a level course along the right bank of the valley shaded with timber and hugging the foot of the Kerry hills. For this very reason, and as affording a better outlook, the discreet and peace-loving soul will do well to select the more open and hillier road which sidles along the northern slope of the vale. Between them the Severn pursues its tortuous way through the lush meadow-land, rioting in noisy shallows where the samlets congregate and a few trout still hold their own from pool to pool, or murmuring gently over some gravelly bottom from deep to deep. These interludes of heavy water become now more frequent: sombre haunts of pike and chub, fringed with willow and alder or betimes overshadowed by the huge limbs of oak, ash, or sycamore that flourish so luxuriantly in the deeper soils of

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Powysland. Straggling, untrimmed hedgerows, obviously the sport of winter floods, criss-cross the vale; pleasant to look upon in summer time and sufficient no doubt to curb the enterprise of meek-faced, docile Herefords, which almost from its source to its mouth are in continual evidence along the Severn's verdant shores, standing knee-deep in the shallows for long, warm hours, or crunching in chorus the matted herbage on the high bank. Thrusting his white moonlike face over a hedge and blinking his pink eyelids at you, the Hereford is inseparable from the Severn. He is supposed to be a fool because he is slow of movement and bland in expression; but he isn't! I have known him intimately from years of angling on Border streams, where it is hardly too much to say he is one's constant and sometimes altogether disconcerting companion. The curiosity of a Hereford ox in his off moments, when neither feeding nor cooling his hocks in a shallow, is simply insatiable. Black Welshmen or long-horned Highlanders will sometimes gallop at you in a body (I am not alluding to bulls, Heaven forbid!) as if to trample you into dust or toss you sky-high, and then, after a harmless demonstration at a safe distance, will retire in loose order, their curiosity satisfied. The average shorthorn, with all his air of superior wits, takes no interest in you at all, and this temperament accounts possibly for the greater rapidity with which he puts on weight. Not so the Hereford. In his kindly boorish way he never lets you alone in his idle moments, but plods doggedly forward with the intention of making friends and keeping friends till you are out of his field. If on the further bank, he almost always makes slow but sure advances through a pet bit of water higher up that you are just going to fish. Nor can you shoo off a Hereford by waving your arms and shouting. He may pause a moment and regard you with blank and pained surprise; but he will come right on directly your back is turned, till he is within perhaps a couple of yards, when he will lower his head and emit a peaceful snort, no doubt his clumsy manner of saying "How do you do?" By this time, unless

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you have taken timely and aggressive measures with the landing-net handle, he will have effectually dispersed the fish you were labouring to circumvent. Often, too, when wholly absorbed in casting over some unresponsive trout or grayling, I have been unpleasantly startled by a warm, damp blast on the back of my legs—the first intimation of the friendly overtures of one of these importunate and inquisitive objects of the river-side.

It is written that in the days of our grandfathers, before the woollen industry was concentrated, there were small mills on the Severn hereabouts; but there is no trace of them left. Aberhafesp Hall, a red brick, late Georgian-looking mansion above the road, suggests comfort rather than history. The Gothic church at the edge of the park, though harmoniously set among foliage on a meadowy slope and in part ancient, does not claim, I believe, that its locked interior is worth a long journey after the key. But if not decorative it is capable, according to a story told of it in Caersws, of rising to the occasion, when supernatural manifestations are in demand. For within easy memory two men of the parish, consumed with a morbid curiosity as to whether death would lay its hand on any of their neighbours in the coming year, resorted to an ancient local usage, disagreeable enough, one might fancy, in both a physical and spiritual sense. For it entailed spending the night of All Hallows Eve in the church porch with ears agog for the names of the doomed individuals, if any, which would be proclaimed in the dread interior. About midnight one of the men distinctly heard the name of his fellow-watcher pronounced by the unearthly voice, but on looking at him found him, fortunately for his peace of mind, sound asleep; so the one as too terrified, the other as too sleepy, abandoned their vigil without more ado.

A few weeks later a man died in the parish of Penstrowel, just across the Severn, and was buried in Aberhafesp church. As there is no bridge nearer than Caersws, it was decided to carry the coffin on horseback across the river. The man whose doom, unknown to himself, had been uttered in the midnight

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darkness of his parish church undertook the river part of the transport and for greater security bent down over the coffin, clasping it with both arms. Now it so happened that the man within it had died of a malignant fever, which was thus communicated to the unfortunate bearer, who was himself a corpse within a week and, as foretold by the spirit, the first parishioner to be laid in the grave that year.

The Welsh country churches were infested with spirits whose formal expulsion by the clergy provided frequent entertainment of an exciting and awesome nature to the countryside. These ceremonious conflicts with the Evil-one continued almost into the nineteenth century. Certain clerics acquired a special reputation in this line and were in great demand. The usual method of invocation, generally conducted behind closed doors, while the people kept credulous watch outside, was to force the disembodied spirit to materialise in the form of an insect or animal. I have told elsewhere how Parson Jones of Llanfihangel, in the Wye valley, drove the troublesome spirit of the usurious tanner, defunct, of Henllan, into a bluebottle, and how the bluebottle, secured in a pill-box, was buried deep in the bog of Caerwnon in the presence of half the parish. Yet there are people who would have you believe that rural life in Georgian times was dull! What raree show of modern days could be half so thrilling as this solomn tussle with the spirit of a deceased neighbour, which had jumped up behind your saddle on night-riding from market and sent you home at a mad gallop of agony and terror?

Newtown would be, on the whole, more attractive to a commercial traveller than to the wayfarer concerned with the picturesque and the past. Not all the enterprise of Pryce Joneses, however, can detract from its delectable site upon the river bank beneath the high hills of Kerry, nor yet from the woodland ways which lead you down so umbrageously into its cheerful busy streets. A few timbered houses still remind the stranger that it has had a former life, if its modest story is virtually obscured by its present reputation, familiar, I take it,

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to British housewives through the length and breadth of the land. There is not very much left of old Newtown amid the great brick flannel mills and the new streets they have called into being. The old Hall, however, almost in the heart of the town, intrenched behind high mellow walls and shady woodland, lurks in curious seclusion and recalls to the knowledgable its strange tale of heady autocratic old squires; while the abandoned ruins of the parish church, which belongs to a bygone epoch and holds the dust of the old-timers, gentle and simple, sits aloof amid dark foliage by the Severn banks.

Stories galore, both sinister and humorous, hang around the memory of the Pryces, who for generations lorded it at Newtown Hall. The old Welsh squire, before the searchlight of nineteenth-century development was turned on the remoter places of the land, was a person of much whimsical originality and addicted to primitively despotic methods. It may be said, of course, that his prototype abounded in the western and northern corners of England. Superficially perhaps, but the hot-headed Welshman was rather different. He took upon occasion, I think, greater liberties than the most heady Cumbrian or Devonian would have risked, and it may be safely said that his dependants and neighbours, being clannishly inclined and but half emancipated from the picturesque licence of their more frankly turbulent past, were more tolerant of choleric eccentricities. The Georgian squires of England have been described by a hundred pens contemporary and retrospective. Domestic Wales is almost an unwritten chapter from the Reformation till the Calvinist revival, which has created an atmosphere that the frolicsome Welshman, gentle or simple, of a former day would undoubtedly find a bit stifling. Glimpses of Georgian and Jacobean Wales can be gathered only from oral traditions picked up here and there about the country, from legal or family records that amply confirm the patriarchal methods pretty generally accepted, or from the printed testimony of infrequent and long-forgotten travellers. Glynne of the Glyn, as cited in the last chapter, could not have existed in eighteenth-century Cornwall or Westmorland. Nor could an

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early eighteenth-century sheriff of Devon have ignored a sentence of death passed on a valued servant at the County Assizes, withdrawn the prisoner from jail, reinstated him, and then a year later on the secret leaking out at head-quarters, hung him in a panic to a birch tree in his own grounds, like . . . . Well, never mind, for his descendants are still *in situ* and the old birch tree has yet life in it after nearly two hundred years. But this was over the hills in Cardiganshire, where people had really much excuse for thinking themselves out of range of the official eye.

There was a brighter side, however, to the old Welsh life, and other people besides squires were gay and rollicking in these days. We have pictures, for instance, of the peasantry dancing in the churchyards on holidays, while the gentry with their ladies, mustering strong on such occasions, flung their heels in a neighbouring barn. Peacock's delightful extravaganza of Headlong Hall gives in burlesque a glimpse of the social atmosphere he might almost have seen in his early courting days, when he wooed and won the Welsh lady whom his friend Shelley christened "The Snowdonian antelope". The Pryces of Newtown have a characteristically original record. It is much too long for these pages. But probably every mill hand in Newtown could tell you how one of the most eccentric of the later squires, having embalmed and preserved his first two wives, laid them out in the marital chamber as a cheerful welcome to the third; and further, what their enraged successor said to the bridegroom on that gruesome occasion. The last Pryce of Newtown, the blind baronet Sir John, seems to have been a chip of the old block, and brought himself and the family estate to an end in characteristic fashion. For, when he had got deeply into debt, a couple of bailiffs, having put up in disguise at the then principal hotel, effected an entry to the Hall and to his rage levied execution on some of his effects. The old man's perverted wrath turned with its whole force on the unfortunate landlady of the inn for having entertained two well-dressed strangers unawares. For a year or two this choleric old

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autocrat concentrated his whole energies on outrageous efforts to deprive the lady of her licence. It is an interesting side-light that she was the aunt of a neighbouring squire, and, furthermore, necessary to state that her house was the best and most reputable in the county. For-swearing himself to the effect that he owed her no personal grudge, and trumping up all sorts of baseless accusations of disorderly doings at her house, the old baronet actually succeeded in having her licence withdrawn for a time. Litigation and counter-suits went merrily forward and kept Newtown in a continual state of pleasant excitement. Country squires whose presence in court was vital to the other side were filled with liquor and locked up in his house by Sir John, and many other strange things done in his mad persecution of the inoffensive landlady. At last he overstepped the bounds, and his victim sued him at Shrewsbury assizes. His case proved so bad that his lawyers threw up their briefs and he was arrested, to be released under heavy bonds. These he promptly broke and fled to London, where all attempts of the law officers who followed on his heels failed to discover him. Eventually he was unearthed, and after further formalities flung into the King's Bench prison, where he died bankrupt in 1776, and was buried six weeks after in Newtown. Even the debt of the grave this strange old man seemed loath to pay. His deer were dispersed, his great estate cut up and sold to pay his long litigation bills and his other creditors, and, with the death of a childless son soon afterwards, the baronetcy lapsed and the race died out, like so many others that lorded it bravely and lived more well than wisely on the banks of the Upper Severn.

The fine old tower of the parish church is still standing. The north wall of the already roofless nave fell with a crash on Christmas Day forty-six years ago, and I met an old woman in the churchyard who heard it fall. The wooden pillars and hewn wooden arches which divided naive and aisle and supported the roof account, perhaps, for the general collapse of this ancient and once important church. The screen was converted into panelling for its successor, which rises conspicuous

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in the new part of the town and harmonises admirably with the woollen mills and warehouses which give to passing travellers from the railway station a first impression of the present day importance of Newtown.

In the meantime the lofty fronts of the Kerry hills are always with us, springing abruptly from the south side of the valley. One must use descriptive terms a little freely for these great areas of Mid-Wales mountain and moorland that have no perceptible cleavage between them but some river valley, narrow enough perhaps, but as an artery of travel and population sufficiently marked to divide the highlands upon its right hand from those upon its left. There is nothing, however, to define the limits of these Kerry hills between here and Llanidloes, or Rhayader or Llandrindod, or even to mark their bounds with Clun forest in Shropshire. The same indeterminate nomenclature prevails as in the still lonelier and rather higher Plinlimmon wilderness of our first chapters which spreads far and wide from the Dovey to the Upper Usk. There are here at any rate some three or four hundred square miles of high breezy sheep country, nowhere exceeding 2000 feet and rarely dropping below half that altitude, save in the narrow, thinly-settled valleys of the many streams that pour out of it into the Wye or Severn.

The striking village of Kerry, some three miles from Newtown, and as many hundred feet above it, is the little metropolis of the wide hill country to which it has given its name. A good highway climbs up there from Newtown, while from the next station of Abermule a branch railway and another road wind up to it by the beautiful woody gorge of the Mule. Fringed by woods and set among verdant meadows in the lap of its own wild hills, Kerry lies above and aloof from the world, but for all that is a place of no small distinction in the chronicles of Wales. More than one prelate has come from its vicarage, among them the late Bishop Ollivant of Llandaff, the last and one of the best of the English bishops in Wales. Dolforgan, whose pleasant parklands adjoin the village, belonged formerly to that notable

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ON THE MULE

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Wiltshire family, the Longs of Rood Ashton, and Mr. Walter Long, their present distinguished head, was born here. In the grounds is the reputed grave of Caradoc or Caractacus, the great Silurian chieftain who for so long defied the Roman power. Antiquaries like to forgather at Kerry. The surrounding hill-tops are crowned with camps; barrows are freely sprinkled all about the parish, while ancient roads and trackways suggest plausible links with the dim days of the Roman lead-miners. There are also within the parish two stone circles and many upright stones. This was the frontier between the Silurians of the South and the Ordovices of North Wales. Antiquaries wage perennial warfare as to which nation claimed Kerry, while the peacemakers suggest that it may have been a sort of debatable land where these rival races could meet and fight when they felt like it.

Kerry, now much decreased in area, was formerly one of the largest parishes in Wales and almost the only one that formed a Cwmwd, or commote, of itself. As such it had a lord of its own in the old Welsh days tributary to the lord of the large cantref of Malienydd which covered so much of Radnorshire. It will be enough to say that with the gradual Norman conquest of Wales it fell under the rule of the great House of Mortimer, and so more or less remained till Lordship rule was abolished in favour of Henry the Eighth's new counties. The name is said to be derived from Ceri, a mountain ash, and thus has been passed on to a breed of sheep, the oldest pure stock, I believe, in Wales, which still range its hills and are familiar to butchers and dealers and epicures throughout the land. But in the village itself the church is naturally enough the spot at which all pilgrims to Kerry forgather. This is not merely because it is a fine old building, but from the fact that it has associations with perhaps the most characteristic episode in the life of a great mediæval personage, whose force, originality, and humour, nay, whose very foibles, are to this day a source of perennial joy to every Welshman, and many others with a soul and a sense of the past within them. Some even who have never read Gerald

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the Welshman's shrewd, whimsical, mordant pages have picked up tags about him and use them on public platforms, in a way that would have horrified the inimitable Archdeacon, to point their moral or adorn their tale. The initiated sometimes describe him in the exuberance of their affection as "the greatest of all Welshmen," and if you know the man, you know what they mean and appreciate the point of view. For myself, I rigidly forbear to reach out my hand at this moment and take down the familiar volume which deals so intimately with the Wales and Welshmen of his own epoch, the twelfth century. If I did, I should assuredly forget that he was not of the Severn valley, but essentially a South Welshman.

His Kerry exploit, however, which is quite in order here, cannot be fully appreciated without something more than a nodding acquaintance with Giraldus. But there is space only to remind the reader that, though he never held an office more exalted than that of Archdeacon of Brecon, this was not for lack of opportunity, but because his life's ambition was the See of St. David's, and his life's dream to revive the more or less supremacy it had held in the old Welsh Church. Gerald had a passionate devotion to his own corner of Wales and above all to St. David's as an ecclesiastical power. He dreamed of its becoming an Archbishopric, with himself peradventure as Archbishop, invested with the pallium derived from the Pope and independent of Canterbury. He had worked hard in the diocese and was the terror of backsliders and defaulters. It is safe to say no such conspicuous archdeacon ever lived. He was once actually chosen bishop by the chapter of St. David's, but Henry II, piqued at what he considered their independence of action, refused to confirm the appointment. Gerald was, indeed, no ordinary priest. Of noble Norman and royal Welsh blood on his father's and mother's side respectively, he was personally well known both at the English Court and at Rome. He was both a man of action and a man of letters, and it is by means of the last that he holds our affections, though to be sure his own activities as set forth therein are part of their charm. He was a most

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patriotic Welshman, both as a resident and as a grandson of the famous Nest, daughter of the last genuine Prince of South Wales. But his half-Norman blood tempers the praise he bestows on his countrymen with pungent criticism of their failings. His vivid and racy picture of Wales in the twelfth century, as the candid friend of his beloved country, is unique and of value inestimable.

It was his jealousy for the honour and power of St. David's that brought him in 1176 on this ever-memorable visit to Kerry from his outlying watch-post at Brecon. The church we now see—the older part of it, that is to say—had then just been completed and was ready for dedication. But it so happened that a dispute concerning the possession of the parish was at the moment in progress between the dioceses of St. Asaph and St. David's; and the bishop of the first-named hailed the dedication of this new church as a fine opportunity to enforce his claim and steal a march on his brother prelate. The whole thing would have passed off quietly enough and been accomplished long before the St. David's people heard anything of the business, but for the watchful Archdeacon at Brecon. Giraldus got news of the scheme just in the nick of time, and, burning with indignation, sent word to his laity kinsmen to supply him immediately with men, horses, and arms, and started hot-foot for Kerry, arriving there on a Sunday morning not a moment too soon. For his lordship of St. Asaph and suite were close at hand, and, the interest of the two parsons attached to the church having been already secured for the northern diocese, they hid the keys from the wrathful Archdeacon, Gerald, however, successfully recovered these and at once entered the church, celebrated mass, and rang the bells. The bishop arrived soon afterwards, with half the country behind him to see the sport, and immediately produced a book which professed to prove that the whole country hereabouts between Severn and Wye was in the St. Asaph diocese. Gerald simply laughed at the bishop's book and demanded a properly-sealed charter, which the bishop could not produce, having nothing but letters from the Archbishop of

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Canterbury commending the diocese generally to his keeping and excommunicating his opponents. Gerald discovered an old school-fellow in the bishop and knew him for a wordy, garrulous man, so he kept him talking till he had laid his own plans. Presently the bishop, donning his mitre and grasping his pastoral staff, set forth at the head of his attendants for the church door, which opened as they approached and disgorged a counter procession of surpliced clergy with lighted candles and a cross, all previously arranged for by Gerald.

As the hostile forces confronted one another in the churchyard and an explanation was demanded of the Archdeacon, he declared that if excommunication was the bishop's game two could play at it. The prelate replied that he was loath to excommunicate an old school-fellow, but he would read a general sentence on all enemies of St. Asaph. "Go to the hills," said Gerald, "and read your general sentence there from morn till night. You must not do it here." The bishop, however, began in a loud voice to excommunicate the enemies of St. Asaph, while Gerald, out-shouting him, poured similar thunders on the enemies of St. David's. The Archdeacon, moreover, had secured the bells and caused them to be rung in triples, so solemn a feature in the rite of excommunication that the bishop's party, confessing themselves worsted, turned and fled, while the spectators pelted them with stones. Gerald then secured the two parsons and made them take an oath of allegiance to St. David's. At supper time, in high good humour at his victory, Gerald sent the discomfited bishop some of his own wine and provisions, an attention which so touched him that the two old school-fellows embraced the next day and parted excellent friends.

Gerald now rode post-haste to tell the King at Northampton, who had the then vacant bishopric of St. David's in his gift, how stoutly and successfully he had vindicated its rights. The King and his courtiers roared with laughter at Gerald's account of the bishop and himself shouting the terrors of excommunication at one another in Kerry churchyard.

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But, though Henry commended the Archdeacon's zeal, he obviously thought it might prove inconvenient in a bishop so far removed from control, particularly in a Welsh patriot who was credited with wanting to be a Welsh archbishop. This savoured of possible trouble, and the King had had more than enough of campaigning in the Welsh mountains for the present. Disappointed again and again of the ambition of his life, and refusing all other high appointments, Giraldus ultimately retired to Manorbier Castle in Pembrokeshire, his birth-place, and in his eyes the most perfect spot on earth, and devoted himself to those literary labours for which we have every cause to be so grateful. The nave, arcade and tower of Kerry church are all Norman and therefore antedate the famous episode above described. It is only the chancel portion with which the dedication of 1176 was concerned.

In Dolforgan hall, already alluded to, are about a dozen curious oak chairs, brought there by the present owner from, I think, the village inn. Their interest lies in the fact that they belonged apparently to a mid-eighteenth century hunt club and bear inlaid brass tablets with quaint inscriptions, one of which runs: "May we see heaven at last when we see no more hounds". The present owner thinks that the club may have had a Jacobite as well as a sporting significance.

Where the Mule, having run its impetuous course down bosky dells, joins the Severn near Abermule station, and perched on a high hill 600 feet above the here narrowing vale, the scant remains of Dolforwyn castle command the surrounding country.

> Where greatness dwelt in pomp, now thistles reign,
> And prickly thorns assert their wide domain,

is the rough rendering of an old Welsh distich on the fallen glories of Dolforwyn, and it is true enough of this as of many of the Norman-Welsh castles.

Founded by Bleddyn ap Cynfan, Prince of Powys, almost at the moment of William the Norman's arrival in England,

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and rebuilt in 1262 by the ill-fated Dafydd ap Llewelyn, it was taken in 1278 by Roger Mortimer, who added to and strengthened the works. It stands on a platform about 200 × 100 yards in extent, whose rocky sides were sharply scarped and carried a curtain wall 20 to 30 feet high, which was standing in Leland's time. Within are still the traces of a circular tower. But, though there is little left of this once proud and dominant fortress, it is worth the stiff climb, if only for the view it commands over the Severn valley, and, should you feel such things, for the memory of the long roll of hard-hitting warriors to whom this same prospect must have been so familiar and so significant. Among the most outstanding of these is the last Prince Llewelyn, to whom Henry III had granted the Powys lordships of Kerry and Kedewain, of which latter Dolforwyn was the military centre. Here Llewelyn kept Easter in 1276, but Roger Mortimer took it by seige in the ensuing wars, which under Edward consummated the conquest of Wales, and thus it was absorbed into that great Mortimer domain which after Glyndwr's upheaval passed by inheritance to the House of York and the Crown. Robert ap Meredith, Prince of Powys, so deeply concerned in the Anglo-Welsh and baronial wars of John and Henry III was another conspicuous owner of Dolforwyn. He is described in the Brut as the chief councillor of Wales, and, though the male line failed, from his daughter are descended many Montgomeryshire families, of whom the Pryces of Newtown were one. Tired with the long turmoil in which he had lived, and like so many others oppressed by a belated concern for the favour of Heaven, this Chieftain of Powys Fadog took the cowl and retired to die in the great Cardiganshire monastery of Strata Florida. Seven farms around Dolforwyn, granted to the Cistercian house, testify to the anxiety of the ageing Meredith for his soul's welfare.

Dolforwyn signifies "the meadow of the maiden," and upon it hangs a famous legend perpetuated by Drayton. This tells how a beautiful girl, having aroused the jealousy of the chatelaine, was drowned in a dark pool of the Severn,

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which here in the temporarily narrowing vale is stirred into unwonted life, fretting amid rocky channels where trout still hold out against the intrusive chub, and tumbling with swifter current into those deep interludes of willow-shaded pool which are favourite resting-places of the ascending salmon.

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CHAPTER IV

MONTGOMERY TO THE BREIDDEN

THE bold Eastern ramparts of the Kerry hills here shrink away from us, and the road pursues its pleasant undulating way through the parish of Llandyssil, with its old half-timbered church, its woody hills and sloping meadows, towards Montgomery. The Severn swerves from side to side of the here contracted vale in sombre pools and gravelly interludes, marking its ever secluded and deep sunk course by a thin screen of woodland which at once binds the soft banks, and shades its gentle streams. Country houses are perched here and there upon the bosky shoulders of the hills. Homesteads and half-timbered cottages hug the rim of the valley on either side with obvious respect for the humours of a river which can change its mood at a moment's notice, and in time of storm fill the vale with the out-pourings of a hundred mountain glens.

From Newtown onward the river has been always craning towards the north, and now, near Montgomery station, it turns yet another point and runs directly northward towards Welshpool. Just here, too, near the bend, is the famous ford of Rhyd-Whinan—famous, that is to say, in history, the course of which has ever been so strongly influenced by the moods of rivers. But this ford is not as others. It has neither made a town nor decided the fate of armies. On the contrary, amid a bloodstained country it was the spot where peacemakers or would-be peacemakers immemorially forgathered. Princes and Norman kings, barons and bishops, knights and abbots met here to make treaties or to patch up truces, too often as unstable as the waters of the Severn that flowed over their horses' feet,

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and the Ford of Montgomery figures in many a mediæval parchment. It is a forgotten enough spot to-day, heaven knows! The plunge of a water rat, the flop of a chub, the splash of a moorhen, the whistle of a ploughman, are the only sounds that break its willow-shaded peace.

The little station of Montgomery might prove disconcerting to anyone on the look-out for some evidence of a country town. For there is not the faintest sign here of anything suggestive of urban life, nor is even a house to speak of within sight. As a matter of fact, the ancient town is nearly two miles distant, and those miles mainly uphill. A one-horse wagonette, which must labour at a walk for much of the way, is the sole means of transport for the encumbered traveller not privately provided for. The question of a motor bus has now this long time agitated the town. But Montgomery is conservative, and the opposition has, so far, been too strong, holding that the ancient peace of the place would be thereby disturbed, and further that the vested interest of the one horse-shay would be unfairly affected. Even the stranger, when, by the latter's aid, he eventually reaches Montgomery, might possibly begin to understand the true inwardness of its Toryism. I must hasten to remark, however, that it is no longer in effect the capital of its county. The moderns would put up with it no longer, and the honours were distributed between Welshpool and Newtown, leaving but a few melancholy traces in bricks and mortar to tell of its shorn dignities. Like Greenlaw in Berwickshire and New Radnor in the neighbouring shire—this last, by the way, quite the most absurd and secluded little county capital that ever was—Montgomery has been displaced. But nothing can rob it of its historic associations, its charm and even dignity of site. Nor is the peaceful atmosphere that so well becomes its links with the past ever likely to be disturbed by anything more distracting than the motor bus with which it is vaguely threatened by the go-ahead minority of its citizens—the total number of whom is not much over a thousand.

One of the hottest little streets I have ever been trapped

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in by a noonday July sun leads steeply up to the most slumberous open square that perhaps could be found in the whole country. But it is not for us to complain of such havens in these unreposeful days—quite the contrary—and we have the tangible evidence already quoted—that content, which is, after all, the secret of life, possesses those here most concerned. A town hall dominates the Square. An admirable hostelry offers good cheer to the passing stranger. A noble old church, planted in a wide-spreading, leafy graveyard, looks down upon all; while far above, on the crown of a woody hill, the remnants of a castle of old renown commands at once both the town and more distant river and a vast deal besides. The origin of Montgomery is indeed written upon its face. The Norman fortress and the sheltering town tell their own story. And even if this ancient outpost of English kings against their restless half-conquered subjects of Wales counted as such for nothing, its later connection with the Herberts and, above all, with Lord Herbert of Chirbury, would make of Montgomery a place of distinction to every lover of things worthy to be held in reverence. There is always attraction in a spot where a great man was merely born or lived. But it is surely more when the man himself has illuminated it with loving hand and in delightful prose, such as Herbert of Chirbury has done for this, his more or less lifelong home. Warrior, courtier, country gentleman, traveller, poet, historian, philosopher, surely no Elizabethan has given us such a frankly intimate picture of a man of that day, as has this one in his memorable and delightful autobiography.

Though there is little left of the great castle of Montgomery but some fragments of wall, the climb up to it is well worth the effort for the prospect it commands. As a matter of fact, however, the outlook from the rear of Montgomery town, itself up-raised upon a ledge below the castle hill, is almost as satisfying. For the English boundary line lies just below, since Shropshire here thrusts a blunt wedge into Wales and one looks southward over the parish of Chirbury and half a dozen others, Welsh and English

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merging one into the other—a fair expanse of pasture and red fallow, generously clad with the oak woods for which this country is noted, and plentifully sprinkled with church-towers, homesteads and country seats. Down below yonder is Lymore, one of the largest half-timbered houses in existence, the property of Lord Powis. Rich in the decorative woodwork and panelling of the Jacobean period, its highest claim to regard is having sheltered the declining years of Lord Herbert of Chirbury, to whom it belonged. Its interior, however, has another attraction which, so far as I know, is unique. For it so happens that the house has not been occupied as a residence since about 1750, though preserved from serious decay within and without. But the interest of its present condition lies in the fact that many of its numerous bedrooms retain, or did so recently, the furniture, four-posters, curtains, carpets and such like, and even the wall-papers of the period at which it was abandoned, a century and a half ago, and all *in situ*.

These things are not preserved as curiosities; there is nothing indeed ornate about them; the rooms have been simply left fortuitously, one might almost say, just as they were when early Georgian men and women of quality slept in them. This struck me when I went over the house a few years ago as a spectacle not to be found perhaps anywhere else in all England. There are historic rooms, carefully preserved, by the hundred or thousand. But these plain low-ceilinged bedrooms and their plain fittings have no show significance whatever—in fact, the house is not shown. They have been simply left as they were, I think I am right in saying, because the successive owners of Powis Castle have had no particular use for them, as no doubt they had for the fittings of the reception rooms, including some beautiful tapestry, which have been long removed. The almost startling realism of these unmolested sleeping chambers moved me to seek information in the proper quarter, and the data given above is the result. They had been in effect sealed up since the time of Horace Walpole; and it was Horace Walpole, by the way, who unearthed and edited

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Lord Herbert's autobiography. The MSS. were actually discovered here at Lymore, but so mutilated by time and ill-usage as to be almost indecipherable. The existence of a duplicate copy, however, was more than suspected, and one was ultimately discovered intact at Ribbesford, that beautiful old home of the Ingrams on the Severn below Bewdley, where the author himself lived for a time and which we shall see later.

The little stretch of rich-coloured champagne country spread out so delightfully beneath the terrace of Montgomery owes a good deal of its effect to its almost mountainous background. For behind the deep leafy dingles of the Camlad brook, which furrows their nearer slopes, the towering forms of the great hills which give South-West Shropshire such distinction begin here to spring up with effective boldness. The sugar-loaf crown of Corndon in the very front reaches an altitude of some 1700 feet, and thence over the rugged summit of the Stiperstones, the sky line rises still higher to the more distant range of the Longmynd and Caradoc. But this is getting away from the Severn and the valley whose fortunes the great fortress of Montgomery and its earlier Lords so vitally influenced. As I have said, there is little left of it. Time and no doubt local barn-builders have done their fell work thoroughly, since after its capture in the Civil War the castle was effectually "sleighted" by Cromwell's orders. A mere fragment of the keep remains to emphasise the characteristically dominant site of a fortress that signified much even among the powerful castles of the Welsh marches. And this one stands at the very edge of the high ridge which at this point formed a natural escarpment, while on its more vulnerable side it was protected by three trenches quarried in the rock.

The green slopes of the hill, which is nearly 400 feet high, are plentifully sprinkled with lusty trees, ash, sycamore or wych elm, in whose shade Montgomery infants sport and Montgomery nymphs and swains no doubt make love. Being on the very edge of old Saxon territory the castle was among the very first to take up the matter of Norman-Welsh conquest.

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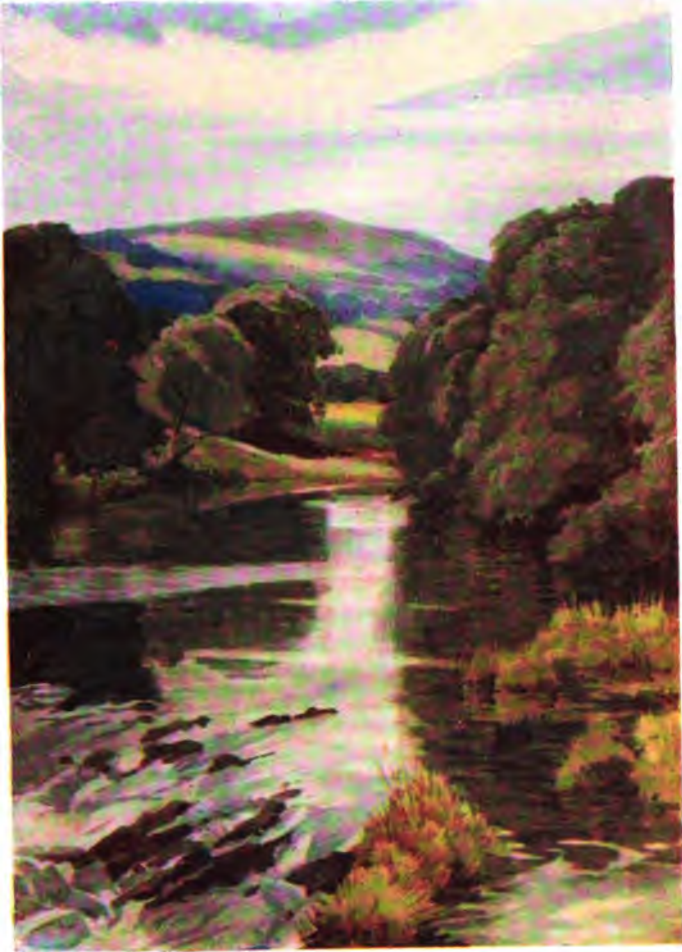

THE SEVERN, ABOVE MONTGOMERY

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For the vulnerable heart of Powys and of Wales lay wide open up this fair valley of the Severn. Activities upon this front were undertaken more directly by the Crown or its agents and not left to the independent enterprise of Lord Marchers like most of this tedious and sanguinary business. Montgomery, indeed, is accounted as a part of Shropshire in Domesday. Roger de Montgomery, first Earl of Shrewsbury, who built the castle at that town, was William's choice for this responsible post, and it was he who also built Montgomery, though Henry III brought it up to the requirements of his own day. But the very sight of a Norman castle was a provocation to the Welsh and they stormed Montgomery successfully and destroyed the garrison in the time of Rufus, who did much Welsh campaigning on his own account as well as through his baronial adventurers. Roger had erected another castle at Kerry, which the still more enraged Welsh also destroyed. They named, and in the vernacular still call Montgomery, Tre-Valdwyn, after a Norman, Baldwin de Bollers, who was granted the castle by Henry I, on marriage with his niece Sybil de Falaise.

It would be impossible here to follow the fortunes of Montgomery Castle through the tangle of the almost ceaseless Anglo-Welsh wars. Powis was in due course nominally conquered, but even Henry III had to come down to Montgomery and defend it against the Welsh, who had already defeated another attempt to maintain a castle at Kerry. The destruction of the fine forests which then covered Montgomeryshire, with a view to more easily coercing the Welsh, seems to have particularly inflamed the men of Powis against their conquerors. By the Tudor period the castle had become the property of the Herberts, that branch of this famous family from which the Earls of Powis are descended. They occupied it for two or three generations in the sixteenth century till in the earlier years of Elizabeth Sir Edward Herbert built Blackhall, afterwards rebuilt as Lymore. Through all this time, however, the Herberts, as Border magnates, played a vigorous and conspicuous part, both as keepers of the peace in a rather lawless country and warriors in foreign wars on the nation's service.

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Edward Herbert, in later life Lord Herbert of Chirbury, tells us how his grandfather, the before-mentioned Sir Edward, having run through his fortune, made another much larger one in the French wars and the English rebellions, which enabled him to indulge in unlimited hospitality at Blackhall, "keeping a very long table twice covered every day with the best meats that could be gotten and a very great family". "It was a common saying," he writes, "among the country folk when they sprung a partridge or a wild duck, '*Fly where thou wilt thou wilt lite at Blackhall*'." The outdoor activities of both this worthy and his son were much engaged in hunting down at the sword's point, and with many hair-breadth escapes to themselves, the outlaws who then infested the Montgomeryshire hills.

Lord Herbert himself was actually born at the home of his maternal grandfather, Sir Richard Newport of Eyton-on-Severn. But as an eldest son he inherited the Montgomery property, and when at home, which was for no great space of his long and varied life, lived either at Lymore or the castle. He was in the latter towards the end of his days when the Parliamentarians laid siege to it. Though of a royalist family, and presumably of their faith, he showed little inclination to be inconvenienced by his principles on this occasion, and made terms very favourable to himself. The literary labours which absorbed his later years probably made him somewhat indifferent to the storm which was convulsing England, strange enough though it seems in a man who had been so active on the world's stage and so prominent on it as to have filled the post of Ambassador to France. It is conceivable, however, that the sympathies of the old philosopher, scholar, and historian, immured in his high-perched embattled seclusion, and his once hot blood long cooled, may have really leaned towards the Parliament side, though his sons were fighting on the other. A smart engagement was actually fought beneath the rock of Montgomery, in which the Roundheads were successful, a matter of no particular regret, it was said, to Lord Herbert, who watched it from the castle walls, and subsequently rather more than made his peace with the victors.

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His autobiography is none the less delightful for the frank vanity which runs all through it, and it is by no means unwelcome to find that his estimate of himself is generally endorsed by his contemporaries, and that his books themselves testify to the intellectual side of his character. The *De veritate*, his chief philosophical work, was written in Latin, and with others of a like kind caused a great stir of admiration and hostility. When dying in London, he sent for Archbishop Ussher to administer the last sacrament, but so scandalised the good prelate by remarking that it might do some good, and could do no harm, that he refused his offices. Herbert's *Life of Henry VIII* was considered by Horace Walpole to be a masterpiece of historical biography. It is not, however, these weighty tomes that are likely to be dragged from their hiding-places by a reader who may perchance be stimulated to an interest in this versatile genius. But the *Autobiography* is another thing altogether. It is moreover available in a cheap reprint, and a better shillingsworth it would be hard to find at a bookseller's. The scope of its interests is remarkable, ranging from the manner in which the noble author deported himself towards his tutor and school-fellows, to his after dealings with the King of France; from those infallible prescriptions of his own, with which he cured the ills of himself, his children, or his servants, to his feats of arms in the Low Countries. His duels and rough-and-tumble street fights are all set forth. The latter are particularly illuminating as showing the extraordinary lack of punctilio that existed among these gorgeous gentlemen when they failed, to use the author's favourite phrase, to "bridle their choler". He tells also of the noble ladies who fell in love with his manly beauty and qualities, that is to say, of those towards whom he played the part of Joseph. Of his horses also he gossips freely, and how he trained them for war and the chase. Regarding this last diversion, however, he held an opposite opinion to that of the moderns, condemning it as a hindrance rather than a help to the serious business of war. Racing he wholly disapproves of as saturated with roguery. But his

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account of field sports in the France of that day is extremely interesting.

He was married by family arrangement at fifteen to a lady of one-and-twenty, another Herbert, and perhaps the most humorous situation of many such in the book is that when his wife and mother-in-law take the precaution of going into residence with him at Oxford. So during his three years at University College one is not surprised to find that he refrains from the follies of his fellow-undergraduates, behaves himself admirably, and reads hard. Among the incidental gems of the *Autobiography* is the author's first introduction at the age of seventeen to Queen Elizabeth. She caught sight of him, he tells us, while on his knees in the Presence Chamber as she passed through it. Swearing her usual oath, she demanded his name from a courtier, and, on hearing who he was and, further, that he was already married, she looked hard at him, gave vent once more to her favourite expletive, and, remarking that it was a pity he had married so young, clapped him gently on each cheek.

After ten years of sober married life, much of it spent usefully in Montgomeryshire, an irrepressible desire to see the world seized upon the young man, so precociously and for so long a period trammelled with domestic cares. The conviction had, no doubt, been long growing in his mind that he had been cheated of his youth. So, having solemnly paraded his wife and children before him, he addressed the former to this effect in firm but reasonable language, not forgetting to credit himself with his unbroken conjugal fidelity. The lady, not being over-pleased, was requested to think over the matter for ten days. Making a virtue, perhaps, of necessity, she no longer offered any opposition. So, having arranged their respective financial affairs, and provided against the untoward possibilities of a long absence, Herbert crossed the Channel and started on those adventures which I must leave for the reader's perusal in the hero's own inimitable language. It only remains to be said that the saintly George Herbert was his younger brother and, though mainly, of course, associated

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with Salisbury, was actually born in Montgomery Castle. If any further proof were needed of the impression Lord Herbert made upon his contemporaries, it may be fittingly supplied by Ben Jonson's famous eulogy:—

> If men get fame for some one virtue, then
> What man art thou that art so many men,
> All-virtuous Herbert! on whose every part
> Truth might spend all her voice, Fame all her art?

I have left no space for more than allusion to the finely-situated, old cruciform church of Montgomery with its interesting font, stalls, and screen, while among the Herbert monuments within it is an altar tomb with recumbent effigies of the parents of Lord Herbert of Chirbury.

From Montgomery station to Welshpool is some six miles, either by the right or the left bank of the Severn. The latter is perhaps the more desirable, and, after crossing the river, with its flat vale, expanding here to nearly a mile in width, and passing the country houses of Garthmylio and Glan-Severn, the picturesque and embowered village of Berriew announces by its name the mouth of that beautiful little trouting stream the Rhiw. It will be enough to note here that an excellent road follows the windings of this deep-sunk delightful vale, making connections beyond with the various routes that traverse the land of Caereinion and the mountain region of North Montgomeryshire. The rectory at Berriew is one of the many fine specimens of black and white which are so numerous in this country as almost to baffle selection, while high above the village are the parklands and mansion of Vaenor, once the property of the Devereux, Earls of Hereford. As Welshpool and Powis Castle come into view, with the high luxuriant ridges behind them, sweeping up to a quite lofty sky-line, the great hog-backed ridge of the Long Mountain springs to the right beyond the Severn, the steepled church of Leighton planted most effectively upon its lower slopes and the woods of Leighton Hall climbing far up its flanks.

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Welshpool, or Pool, as it is invariably called in the neighbourhood, is a quietly prosperous market town and meeting-place for county business. There is little to give pause to the passing stranger, either from an antiquarian or æsthetic point of view, beyond its attractive situation, though like every town with a long history it possesses a few buildings and sites of interest to the local antiquary. The parish church, of thirteenth century date, has still, in spite of restorations, some old work left in it, but otherwise there would not be very much in the town itself, unless it were bed and board, to detain the wandering stranger. Its history is practically that of the great castle overlooking it, while that of the castle again is bound up with the records of the Lordship of Upper Powys which in 1535 was welded into the new county of Montgomery. Powis Castle, lifted well above the Severn valley, with its dark red stone, its vast drum towers, and huge embattled curtain walls, looks tremendously imposing from below and more than atones for any lack of distinction from which the neighbouring town might seem to suffer. Its richly-timbered parklands form a fitting background, climbing gradually to a height of some 1200 feet and supplying that lofty signal station, in this case overlooking half Wales, which was the necessary complement of a great fortress, holding in a manner one of the national gateways. No wonder the *Castell-Coch*, the *Red Castle*, as it was known of old, took Scott's fancy on that Welsh tour of his which resulted in *The Betrothed*. The original stronghold is first alluded to in 1107, but not much is heard of it again till it was occupied by the turbulent Gwenwynwyn, Prince of Upper Powys, son of a famous father, the poet-warrior Owen. Indeed, it was probably in the Red Castle that the last-named redoubtable chieftain composed and recited to his surviving warriors that remarkable blend of lament for the dead and cheer for the living, *The Hirlas Horn*, familiar to every Welshman with the least knowledge of his country's poets or his country's history. Cynddelw, a contemporary bard, celebrates the unbounded hospitality of Owen Cyfeiliog here "beneath the Long Mountain".

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Lo, the chieftain's sparkling store
Circles neath the moonlight beam:
Proud though Hafren's Eagles soar,
Prouder we near Hafren's stream.

The son, Gwenwynwyn, however, beyond doubt made the Castell-Coch his residence and the capital of Upper Powys, spending his days in knocking his head alternately against Llewelyn the great on one side and successive English kings on the other, with the natural result that the castle changed hands several times during the process. His son Griffith had an equally chequered career. He began life, the first of his line to hold Upper Powys as an English barony under the English king, coupled with the title of de-la-Pole. With the early successes of the last Llewelyn Powys became again a Welsh fief. But having always more or less English sympathies, Griffith defied Llewelyn, who, according to the Welsh chronicle, assembled "all Wales," captured the castle, and this time burnt it to the ground. At the death of Llewelyn and the final conquest of Wales the Powys princes relapsed into English barons and soon, failing in male heirs, what was left of their heritage passed by marriage to de Charltons of Shropshire. The young woman of eighteen who thus carried away the noble heritage into an English family, much against her people's will, was Lady Hawys, popularly known as y Gadarn (the hardy). She earned the soubriquet by her resistance to her Welsh uncles who denied the right of a woman to the family honours and threatened her position. In the end she appealed to King Edward, who, to solve the question, promptly married her to de Charlton, one of his own men.

It was the first Charlton who built the older portions of the present castle. It was in their day that the town and castle stemmed the billows of Glyndwr's long rebellion which surged frequently against their walls. And for this service the civic bounds of Pool were extended over an area almost unique in territorial extent. It was soon afterwards, too, that the noted Lollard leader, Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, after hiding for three years from the King's vengeance with a great reward

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upon his head, was captured in the neighbourhood after a stout resistance and brought to the castle, prior to his execution in London, where he was "hanged as a traitor and burnt as a heretic". Henry V had promised immunity from the King's taxes to any place that would capture the audacious heretic dead or alive. This perhaps was the chief motive which stimulated a company of Welshpool burgesses led by Sir Griffith Vaughan of Garth to the above-mentioned profitable achievement. Edward Charlton supplied the bloodhounds used for the purpose and fell thereby under some old woman's curse. But in spite of the labours of an anchorite who was engaged on a seven years' contract to dispel it, Charlton died in the interval and failing in heirs male, a long interlude of Greys and Dudleys figured as Lords of Powys.

It was not till the days of Lord Herbert of Chirbury that it came by purchase to a branch of that family, who still hold it. But their career has been chequered and the succession anything but direct. One earl was thrown into the tower on the evidence of Titus Oates. James II, however, took him out and ultimately made him a duke. Though a misguided politician, he was almost the only honest supporter of that unpractical bigot. But following his master even into exile he died in Paris, shorn of all but his dukedom, the barony being given by William to a Dutchman. The second duke took part in the Jacobite rising of 1715, and thence found his way to the Tower. However, he fared well, for he was ultimately restored to the Powys lands *vice* the Dutchman removed. His successor and son enjoyed his honours for but a brief time, and failing heirs, the dukedom lapsed. A distant kinsman, the Lord of Chirbury of that day, now inherited the castle and was created Earl of Powis,[1] but soon dying childless, a daughter carried the property in 1804 to Lord Clive, a son of the great Anglo-Indian, who was created Earl of Powis, while his son took the name of Herbert. This I

[1] Some time in the eighteenth century, the spelling of *Powys* as regards the title and the castle seems to have been anglicised to *Powis*, the present form.

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trust not too genealogical interlude brings us to the immediate forbears of the present holder of the title and estates, which last are of immense extent.

Nor should the fact be omitted that after a Royalist force had been routed in the streets of the town in August, 1644, the castle surprised and stormed a month later in the night, Lord Powis himself being captured within it, it was occupied by the Parliamentarians till the Restoration. Parts of the present building go back to the fourteenth century while some of the outworks belong to an even earlier period. A great deal of restoration has taken place, inevitable in a mansion continually occupied in later times by owners holding so dominant a position in the Upper Severn valley. Its roof is said to be the oldest portion and there is a handsome Jacobean porch over an Edwardian entrance. Valuable tapestries and numbers of family portraits by great painters, besides other works of art and antiquity, adorn the great apartments and the galleries, while the terraces, particularly the old dial terrace, the gardens and the fine oak timber in the park, are worthy of the great traditions of this historic seat. Above all, it is the last of the old native royal castles of Wales. Aberffraw and Mathraval have been long wiped out. Dynevor and Dinas-Bran are but splintered towers rising grim and forsaken upon their windy pinnacles.

It is no "pool" in the Severn, winding though it does through the green meadows below town and castle, that is responsible for the name which has clung in a measure to the sites of both from earliest times, but a small tarn in the park. The Welsh still call the place Trallwng, a corruption of Tre-y-llyn (the town by the lake). The first English title taken by the Welsh lords was De-la-Pole. The prefix was doubtless added, and perhaps mainly for outside consumption, being even now rarely used locally, to indicate the nationality of the inhabitants. For, as Mr. Robert Owen, the *Vates Sacer* of Welshpool—to whom here as on former occasions I am greatly indebted—has pointed out, the Severn, which it must be remembered, is now running due north, forms ethnologically

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a sharp and perfect boundary just here between Celt and Saxon. To the west of the river there appears to be no single instance of a genuine Saxon place-name, while upon the east Saxon is almost as prevalent in the local nomenclature as the other.

Looking east from Welshpool we are at once confronted, and at close quarters, with one of those abrupt and striking barriers that at so many points mark the boundary between England and Wales, now as in the past, with such precision and significance. The Long Mountain and the Breidden, that bold, upstanding triple-crested mass, which together seem to cut off this country so completely from Salop and England, form here a most imposing natural wall. Behind it and near the gateway through which the Severn slips, Welshpool and its great castle tell a tale at a glance of watch and ward that needs no emphasising by printed page. Of Saxon blood, however, as I have already mentioned, there is plenty all up the Severn valley, even as far as Caersws. These families are mainly, I think, of ancient introduction, derived no doubt in many cases from followers of Norman lords, who won their way from castle to castle.

The riverside pastures, expanding here from Pool to the foot of the up-springing Breidden, give the latter the full advantage in aspect of its almost precipitous wood-clad rocky sides and bold lofty summits—as imposing an isolated mountain in miniature as 1200 feet could anywhere achieve, and a fitting background to the lovely vale through which the Severn, shedding for a space its fringe of foliage, coils in shining loops. Lifted up upon the eastern edge of this, a mile or so from Welshpool and at the foot of the Long Mountain, are the village and old church of Buttington, celebrated for a defeat of the Danes by a combined Saxon and Welsh army in 894, though I have heard one or two daring souls dispute the claim to be the scene of that encounter. A mile or two further on, close to the left bank of the river, a few stones and ditches mark the excavated site of the once great Cistercian abbey of Strata Mercella, founded

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NEAR WELSHPOOL

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about 1172 by Owen Cyfeiliog. Not a trace of it now remains above ground. It is supposed to have been destroyed by Glyndwr, and surviving fragments are found in the churches of Buttington, Guilsfield, and Pool. This was the second largest abbey in Wales, having, as revealed by excavation, a nave 200 feet long, with a choir and presbytery behind it, besides two transepts and a tower base. It is said to have been eighty years in the building. Its Abbot was a mighty man, and one of them, David ap Owen, obviously knew how to work the bards to his greater exaltation if the means he employed were not too unblushingly blazoned forth. "Can it be questioned," says one of them, "what Abbot is equal to David or one worthier to succeed St. Cattwg? He surpasses the Pope. His golden clothes surpass those of the Pope, a planet of heaven, long life to him. Twenty kinds of wine had David, and we received gifts from him. From Paris he brought the bard, at his personal expense, wine of Germany and more than enough from Poitou. What a lineage! What a presence! What a saint! Who is he? Gold! Gold!" This rhapsody was not necessarily written under the influence of the Abbot's good cheer, as the reader might take for granted. If a trifle overdone, it was only payment for goods received and favours to come. It was quite in order and we shall come across another grateful poet presently.

By the site of the abbey is Pool-quay, merely interesting as the head of an old system of navigation which in former days was maintained thus far up the Severn. The weirs by which it was made available have long gone and the river has dropped back to its natural wayward course of pool and shallow, though scarcely anywhere shallow enough from here downward for a man to wade without removing his nether garments altogether which is tantamount to prohibition. This may seem a small, purposeless and even vulgar interpolation. On the contrary it means a great deal. A river whose shallows anyone can hop across in dry weather from stone to stone or wade ankle deep has no significance at all

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as a barrier. But a river even of comparatively small compass that can only be crossed by bridges and is, moreover, of a formidable character, like the Severn which demands costly bridges, separates the people on either side of it to a quite surprising extent and helps to make local history.

The floods of the Severn are notorious for obvious reasons. During heavy rains the levels between Welshpool and the Breidden for many miles are transformed into one vast sheet of water. Welshpool is, I think, proud of its floods, and in the lush summer time when the Severn, hidden from the highway between high bushy banks, is but an unnoticeable trail of foliage through the green pastures, displays picture post cards to the transient stranger of wastes of water and snow-covered hills as if to show what Sabrina can do when she tries. But it is under the Breidden, where the hills upon the left bank stop abruptly on the English border and fall away towards the north, opening out the rolling plain of Shropshire, that the Severn begins really to count in this sense. For as already noted, this is one of the great natural gateways into Wales and proclaims the fact in unmistakable and inspiring fashion. Travellers by road or rail to Shrewsbury and England, leave the Severn at Buttington below Welshpool and climb the narrow pass between the southern steeps of the Breidden and the Long Mountain, a delightful strech of bosky vale and bold hill scenery; fresh and charming to the eye of the westward-bound traveller who for many weary hours perhaps has contemplated the rather monotonous low-pitched country traversed by the North-Western between London and this Welsh borderland.

But before following the Severn, which may almost be said to steal away henceforward, in its course to Shrewsbury, from the haunts of men and hide itself in the secluded pasture lands of unpopulous parishes, a word must be said of this same Long Mountain, humping as it does its shaggy back of heath and fern for some seven miles without dropping below a thousand feet; its green flanks laced with copse and hedgerow and sprinkled with many an old and shady home-

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stead of stone or timber. Cefn Digoll has everything to do with the Severn. For it dips almost to the river's bank by Buttington and Leighton at the Welsh end, though on the English side it forges away eastward and faces the Shropshire plain. But from its highest point, Beacon Hill (Caer Digoll, 1340 feet above Welshpool), it commands, like its neighbour the Breidden, glorious views up the Welsh Severn, and yet more distant ones of all the chief mountains of North Wales.

Many things have happened on Cefn Digoll. Wandering along its broad lonely back upon a summer evening, amid the waste of tangled bracken, heather and bog grasses, with no sound, as I recall it, but the tweet of the tit-lark and the soft sough of the breeze among the bents, the echoes of these old shadowy doings seem near one, the phantoms of these dim heroes seem almost on the point of breaking the silence of a thousand years. Scraps of Llywarch hen or Taliesin, if you can gather them up, come vaguely mingling with the balmy air.

> The graves on the Long Mountain
> Multitudes well know it.
> The graves of Gwrien, Gwryd, Engward
> And Llwyddog the son of Lliwelydd

These mystic lines refer to the great battle, or sequence of battles, here fought between the Northumbrians under Edwin and the British under "Cadwallon the renowned," which resulted in the former's final overthrow. This seems, moreover, to have been disputed ground between Welsh and Normans, though in truth no such excuse was needed to provoke a fight. But it is worth remembering that after Llewelyn's last struggle with Edward I, the rising of his kinsman Madoc a few years later was suppressed by the King here on the Long Mountain, and was important enough to bring Edward back from a French enterprise. Madoc, after some success about Denbigh, was pursued hither by the King and finally overthrown. On Cefn Digoll, Henry VII, on his way from Milford with his foreign supporters to Bosworth Field and its resultant crown, crossed the Long Mountain after

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a night at Welshpool. Nay, more than this, for it was here, according to tradition, that his North Welsh friends and their followers met him by appointment and sensibly swelled the little force that was to increase yet more as he passed through Shrewsbury and the Midlands.

On the English end of the Long Mountain, in the parish of Woolaston, the cottage still stands in which dwelt old Parr, who was born in the reign of Edward IV and died in that of Charles I at the reputed age of 152 years. As to these astounding figures one can only say that they passed muster with his neighbours and the public. There is no doubt that the fame of the old man spread throughout England, when after completing his century he married a Welsh girl and three years later had to do penance in the church at Alderbury for having an illegitimate child by a girl named Catherine Milton. He was sent to London to see Charles I, and, on being asked what he considered the most memorable event of his long life, he cited this his latest escapade. Whereupon the king reproved him: "Fie, fie, can you remember nothing but your vices?" The impression that his age made on his generation is so pronounced as almost to shake one's disbelief in what is assumed to be a physical impossibility. There are one or two contemporary pictures of Old Parr, one of which I have seen hanging up at Loton Hall. Taylor, the water poet, gives an exhaustive sketch of him in his extreme old age, and from his doggerel one learns that though the old man's limbs had lost all their strength, his sight gone, and only one tooth left, he still fed and slept well and had an excellent digestion.

> He would speak heartily, laugh and be merry,
> Drink ale, and now and then a cup of sherry.

Lastly, he was covered all over with a thick coat of hair—a truly formidable apparition! The hamlet of Middletown, across the vale from just below old Parr's cottage, lies in the parish of Woolaston, where there is a brass tablet to the "old, old, very old man, Thomas Parr". He actually died in London, his life being shortened, according to his own account,

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by his summons there to see the King, and he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Middletown, with a station on the railroad, stands at the very foot of the Breidden and is the usual starting-point for ascending the hills, which form a curious mountain-like group, springing as they do at every quarter so sharply out of the plain. At almost every point of their six or seven-mile circuit their sides are too steep to climb conveniently by other than zigzag methods, while in some places they are virtually perpendicular. Speaking roughly, the Breidden, though in a sense but one mountain, is composed of two ridges meeting, or nearly so, at each extremity and enclosing a snug and cup-like valley of charmingly diversified surface. For raised high above the plain below, and shut out from it by their rampart hills, are two or three small farms, among wide-stretching commons of crisp turf, freely sprinkled with patches of gorse and bracken, of brake and copse, and here and there carrying fine groups of ash and oak trees. A lane struggles up a narrow cleft in the hills at the Shropshire end into this little upper world and serves its few inhabitants. The eastern half of the southern ridge of the Breidden is of bare turf and on its extremity, *Cefn-y-Castell*, is a well-defined British camp. The western half is mainly woodland, and from its sharp uplifted extremity, *Moel-y-golfa* (1200 ft.) looks straight up the Montgomeryshire Severn. The northern ridge rises to its highest point in the centre where Rodney's pillar stands conspicuous at the very edge of the steep outer escarpment of the hill, looking right down upon the Severn and away northward to Oswestry and the dim shapes of the Berwyn mountains. Traces of a camp are here too, and should be, for this perhaps has the strongest claim to be the scene of the last stand of the British under Caractacus against the Roman arms, as described by Tacitus, who presumably derived the facts from his father-in-law, the Roman general Agricola. This, to be sure, is a subject of keen contest among antiquaries, some holding to Coxwall knoll in Hertfordshire, some to the Cefn Carnedd between Caersws and Llanidloes, as already noted.

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The Breidden advocates, judging from the few details given by Tacitus, should, I think, hold the field. At Coxwall, for instance, there is no river or stream presenting any difficulties, an important item in the battle, while below Cefn Carnedd the Severn is much smaller and more frequently fordable. Here about Poolquay and below the western escarpment of the Breidden the difficulties of fording the Severn are indisputable. *Amnis vado incerto*, Tacitus calls it. A study of the river hereabouts, with such knowledge of its former conditions as a local antiquary can best gather, has quite satisfied the venerable Nestor in all such matters on the Upper Severn, that this steepest face of the Breidden is the scene of the immortal conflict, the Britons defending the hill top behind their works, and the Romans forming the tortoise with their shields flat above their heads as a roof from under which they demolished the loose wall. Archdeacon Thomas, here referred to as a staunch believer in the Breidden theory, is moreover Vicar of Llandrinio, just here on the river bank beneath the very scene itself. This is on the fringe, too, of the Ordovices country; but the Silurian chieftain, so the Roman historian tells us, to make up for his inferior numbers, had drawn the war northward, on this very account hoping for their support.

Upon this same side of the Breidden, on which the Romans presumably attacked the British, stands Rodney's pillar, already spoken of. This is a tall obelisk resting on a pedestal, with a ball at the top. It serves as a landmark over a wide stretch of country and was erected in 1781 by the gentry of Salop and Montgomery in honour of Admiral Lord Rodney's services to his country, though his decisive victory of 1782, which obliterated the odium of certain irregularities, had not yet been achieved. Rodney had nothing to do with this part of the world, and cynics declare that the devotion of these border squires to the Admiral arose from the high prices which their oak-trees fetched during his command, for the Admiral was, I think, a strong advocate of British as against foreign or colonial oak. The first sale of local timber for the navy took place about 1750. Henceforward Montgomery-

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shire oak, which was then extraordinarily abundant and of the very finest quality, came rapidly into notice for the navy, and as the century went on fetched increasing prices. It eventually topped the market in spite of the difficulties of carriage, a great deal of it being floated down the Severn from Pool Quay. A visitor to the county in that day records his surprise at the interest manifested by various country gentlemen he met in particular battle-ships, till he discovered that their own woods had supplied the timber from which these were partly built! Instances are quoted of oak woods worth twelve times the fee simple value of the land on which they grew.

At the time of Waterloo a Breiddinite club had been accustomed to dine annually beside Rodney's monument for a sufficient length of time to be dubbed by a local journal "a classic institution". It was composed of gentlemen and ladies of the two counties. The repast was followed by toasts, addresses, and songs, one of which was always the "Breidden glee," a melody lost to fame. These were delivered in a tent to which the party repaired after dining in the open air. The effusions in both prose and verse were all of a patriotic nature and the celebration altogether characteristic of the robust patriotism that in "Good King George's glorious days" animated the country squires and their belongings. The pillar which in olden days marked so many scenes of patriotic conviviality carried originally a Welsh inscription on its Welsh side and an English one on its Shropshire front; but these are obliterated. Some repairs were necessary about sixty years ago, for the obelisk, which is about 50 feet high, was struck by a thunderbolt and much damaged. The all-but precipice, upon the brink of which it stands, rises 800 feet above the Severn meadows below. There is a fine view hence to the north and north-westward over the enfolding hills through which the Vyrnwy comes down from its distant birthplace in the Berwyns, through the lovely vale of Meifod, while near by the high red cliffs of Llanymynech flush in the sunshine above the wide green levels which mingle with those of

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the Severn and contain the confluence of the two rivers at Melverley.

A summer day, and it should be a long one, up among the Breidden is a thing to be remembered. Whether traversing its high outer ramparts from point to point, with their varied and noble outlook, or rambling amid the dells and woody gorges whence exquisite glimpses of the country far below are disclosed at unexpected moments, or wandering over the ferny commons which spread inconsequently about the surface of this hill-encompassed upland arcady, the hours steal quickly by. The British camp of *Cefn-Castell*, which from the easterly point of the Breidden dominates the great plain of Shropshire and the big ranges that terminate it to the southward, is in some respects perhaps the most striking vantage-point of all. On a clear day, though a dozen miles away, the spires and buildings of Shrewsbury show up clearly on its two ridges in the middle distance, while rare flashes of the Severn, winding thither its secluded solitary course, catches the light. The long height of Haughmond rises behind all, while northward the more level half of Shropshire, with its woods, red fallows, parklands and church spires, spreads warm and restful into a dimmer colouring to the famous ridge of Hawkestone, which commemorates a great soldier as the Breidden honours a great sailor. Looking to the southward of Shrewsbury again and far beyond it, the big hump of the Wrekin, without which no survey of Shropshire would be complete, does its duty with unmistakable prominence. Yet more southerly still, and following the horizon towards the west, rolls that array of bold heights from Caradoc to the Long mynd over Church Stretton, and from thence over the rugged crests of the Stiper-stones and so on again to Corndon above Chirbury and the Welsh border hills that we have just left behind us.

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CHAPTER V

THE BREIDDEN TO SHREWSBURY

WELSH families who have any claim to antiquity at all, and these, as every one knows, are pretty numerous, go back into the mists of time at which the Saxon, not in truth being much of a genealogist, is inclined to make merry. But as a matter of fact the Welsh pedigrees in olden times were for practical reasons very carefully kept, and a landocracy, that till recently at any rate had been over most of Wales but little disturbed, had no difficulty in linking themselves up to the end of the chain which connected them with one or other of the well-known Royal or noble stocks; after which all is plain sailing into times remote! The Norman conquest, from this point of view, has no direct significance for the Welsh "Boneddiggion". Their noblesse —to use a loose but convenient term—were not submerged. They were merely "over-lorded" throughout much of the country by big Norman barons who sometimes even intermarried with them.

A few English families still *in situ*, we all know, go back to one of William's Normans and a good many more claim to. Some bear ancient and distinguished names to which they have no sort of claim on either the male or female side. But this does not matter much as long as they have the property which, from the English point of view, is nearly all that really counts. There is no doubt, however, about the Corbets, for the first of them was planted in the country immediately below us as we look down from the Breidden, and he was given, moreover, a very big slice of it. They were, in short, Norman barons and intermarried as well as fought a good deal with the Princely stock of Powysland,

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on whom it was part of their business to keep an eye. The reader, I trust, does not need reminding that Corbet is a name to conjure with in Shropshire to this day, to say nothing of Cheshire. There are Corbets and Corbetts, and, moreover, there is a mystical distinction in the number of t's which everybody is expected to observe with quite exceptional particularity and no doubt for some good reason; though, as a comparatively short time ago men of rank frequently spelt their own name in diverse ways within the compass of a single document, this cleavage must be of tolerably recent origin. However this may be, the original nest of Roger Fitz-Corbet, the Norman, can be plainly seen from the top of the Breidden; or, to be precise, the high woody knoll to which its crumbling fragments cling amid a tangle of brush and underwood can be readily picked out, a little way from the village of Westbury, upon the eastern foot of the Long Mountain. Caus Castle was named after Pays-de-Caux in Normandy, whence the first Corbets came. The situation was one of the strongest on the Welsh Border, crowning a high insulated ridge, around whose foot and flanks may still be seen the remains of deep ditches and outworks, now choked with foliage, that once protected the castle. The base of the keep on the summit of the hill, a mere fragment of rubble, the remains of a gateway and traces of the outer walls are about all that remain. In the days of King John there seems to have been some sort of a town at the base of the castle hill, covering eight acres of ground. The castle enclosure itself originally occupied very nearly that area.

The village of Criggion lies picturesquely upon level meads at the foot of the steep northern declivity of the Breidden, while upon the further bank of Severn, which winds through the adjoining pastures, stands the ancient little church of Llandrinio and its pleasant rectory. The former is a long, plain building with a bell turret, but is one of those whose age-worn stones and mellow roof seem to express of themselves, without any elaborate and ornate accessories, the deep roots which an old frontier parish, such as this one on the

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Severn, strikes into the past. The last road bridge, too, for many miles here crosses the river, and a castle once stood near by upon the bank, of which nothing now remains but a low mound. The village of Llandrinio, which lies back out of sight, had once its weekly market and two annual fairs. It seems altogether in keeping that the oldest and perhaps foremost member of that body of men, living and dead, who have laboured to reveal and preserve the historical treasures of Powysland should be in charge of this, its very gate-way. It was a singularly happy discovery in the Mostyn MSS. by the same venerable antiquary[1] that a few years since brought to light two interesting poems on his own parish by the well-known bard Gutto'r Glyn, and "broke at last," in the Archdeacon's own words, "the deep silence that has hung over Llandrinio in the fifteenth century". He kindly gave me a copy of the poems with his own notes on them. I had, many years ago, encountered—if the phrase be permissible—this same bard lavishing very similar encomiums on the good cheer of the monks of Vale Crucis, near Llangollen, of which place he was, in fact, a native. Indeed, when the mission of stirring the war-like impulses of their patrons had lapsed through the conquest and pacification of Wales, the bard of the official and domestic type had to earn the patronage of those who could do him well, by extolling their personal virtues and hospitalities. As a matter of fact, however, these two poems of Gutto'r, as giving a contemporary picture, though in characteristically hyperbolic strain, of an ordinary well-to-do country residence at a dark period, are of no little interest, while the eagerness of the cheer-loving poet for the cakes and ale are, as in most similar effusions, delightfully frank and quaint. Sir John Mochain, parson of Llandrinio, is the dispenser and patron in this case and only comparable to the deceased Vicar of Corwen, near Gutto'r's own home.

The knightly prefix, one need hardly remind the reader, is the purely honorary one so frequently applied to clerics at that and later periods. But this Llandrinio parson, hyperbole apart, was obviously a man of substance. He lived in Plâs-hên

[1] Since deceased.

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(the old hall), close by the site of the present rectory and surrounded by a moat which is still in parts visible:—

> The Court of oaken timber and the Hall,
> By water girt, a moated fort provide.
> The Hall suffices for a thousand guests,
> A hall on land in Trinio's isle,
> On a fair bank upon the river's bank.
> A hall sufficient for all Powys land.

There are "nine whitewashed rooms of stone, covered by a tile roof, and fair curtains within; a parlour for the host who shares the wine; a pent house for the cook, a pantry and kitchen; a tower above which withstands the loud-voiced thunderings of the host of heaven. Three tables are laid and the dark-brow'd Cardinal defrays the cost." These are but brief gems from one translated poem, while in the other the bard asks himself if there is anyone like Kyffen, the parson of Corwen, who dispenses wine from the wood, but who, alas! for the bard, has gone to Heaven. Fortunately, there *is* one man down in Powys qualified to rank with him and that is "Sir John of Mochain with the jet black brows, unstinted in gifts, a dark-visaged baron like the Oswald of the men of Powys, the parson that spares nor purse nor cost. He smiles on the minstrel and adds gold to the mead, nor in all Powysland is there a churchman who dispenses the wine more freely."

Gutto'r has never been there, he declares, without receiving gifts, and intends not to miss a single festival at Llandrinio. "No man wins affection for his own roof-tree like Sir John, and I will assuredly then go and claim my support." Sir John seems to have charged the bard by all the saints not to be divided from him in their old age, "so if cold-blooded war shall come and scatter the bards over the earth, I will flee to the Thornwood in Llandrinio, and I shall find in the wood when Owen comes a new fortune".

This last allusion is undoubtedly to Owen Glyndwr, whose rising was then within easy memory, and whose resurrection at some future day was an article of pious faith

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among all patriotic Welshmen, not proof, if any such there were, against the supernatural. The fact and place of Glyndwr's death were really a mystery to his own generation, and consequently to succeeding ones, but it was currently rumoured that he lay entranced beside his arms in some subterranean cave with the remnant of his followers, like Arthur awaiting the propitious moment for striking another blow for his country.

Some painful foreboding that he might one day have to go to work again and become a shepherd elicits a further vow from the bard that should such an untoward thing happen, he will "drive no lambs to England (a job he had apparently done for the vicar of Corwen), but the lambs of dear Llandrinio". Possibly these reflections on the materialism of Gutto'r Glyn are unjust. For he was really a singer of note, chief bard to the Earls of Pembroke and other Herberts of South Wales, as well as to his old local friends, the monks of Vale Crucis, and no doubt was welcome to the best they had. For in over a hundred surviving poems he has given a great deal of valuable data regarding the Welsh families of the fifteenth century. The fulsome and hyperbolic habit was no doubt a convention of the period. But such men as this supply precious and life-like interludes between legendary superstition and the more purely historical chronicles.

Below Llandrinio the broad level pasture-lands of the old Border-Welsh district of Deythur spread eastward. Amid the seclusion from roads and habitations which almost of necessity distinguishes a frequently submerged country like this one, the Vyrnwy and the Severn mingle their waters. There is little of that bright and buoyant river, which has urged its long, impetuous course through deep Welsh valleys and by old Welsh villages with their ancient churches and memories of British saints, in these final reaches of the Vyrnwy. Gurgling over pebbly shallows between high red bushy banks from deep to deep, with all the manner of the but slightly greater Severn, as if qualifying for the impending partnership, the confluence of the two rivers, in high summer time at

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any rate, is singularly undistinguished. The bordering pastures are tousley with straggling thickets of thorn, willow or alder, rank with tussocky grass, and bright with the flare of gorse and ragwort, the red berries of scattering briars, and the pink patches of sprawling rest-harrow. Fly-tormented bullocks wander restlessly from the sun glare of the rich feeding patches to the cool groves along the high river bank, or, failing relief even there, splash noisily into the river shallows, or again stand motionless and belly deep on the edge of the sandy-bottomed pools. The secure retreat of the kingfisher, too, and the favourite haunt of herons from distant heronries, are these unmolested levels where Severn and Vyrnwy meet.

But this is high summer-time and winter is apt to present an altogether different picture. "God help Melverley" is an ancient and familiar local saying, and the little timbered church of that afflicted and amphibious parish stands upon a high bank above the Vyrnwy, lifted no doubt just above the waste of waters which in a wet winter turns the land of Deythur into an inland sea. The old black-and-white fifteenth century church, a plain oblong building with a bell-turret, but possessing a strong point of interest in the two close rows of upright timbers which bind the walls, stands, as already noted, upon the very edge of the Vyrnwy's high bank, encircled by yews and other trees upon all sides save that open to the river. The distinguished dead of Melverley sleep forgotten beneath the time-worn and often indecipherable headstones that stand thick and at all angles above the matting turf of its secluded graveyard. Amid a tangle of paddocks, lush hedges and hedgerow timber, a modest inn offers modest hospitality to the wayfarer. Here too stray anglers of the more unaspiring kind, men of the bait-box and minnow-tin in pursuit of the coarse fish, which hereabouts are the chief product of both Severn and Vyrnwy, will perchance be encountered; honest souls from desk or counter in some neighbouring border town; philosophers prepared, if need be, to face many blank hours and to put up with their own company in patient solitude

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through the live-long day in some willow-shaded nook of the river. Men of a clear conscience surely, artists perhaps who have never held a brush, poets who could not write a line. If an all-pervading and unbroken peace, but for the stir of leaves, the murmur of water, and the crunch of Hereford steers, is what they are seeking as well as pike or chub, Melverley, "God help it," is an ideal spot. The ruddy cliffs of Llanymynech, where some five miles away the Vyrnwy breaks out of the Welsh hills, is a conspicuous landmark throughout all this country. And when a westering sun flames upon the quarried summits of that famous hill above the low green plain the effect is admirable. Melverley, it may be noted as a parting word, is one of those border English parishes included from immemorial times in a Welsh diocese, in this case that of St. Asaph.

This corner of Shropshire, eluded by the main lines, is fed by a little branch railway running from Shrewsbury to Llanymynech. It has had a chequered career in the past; grass-grown interludes of inanition following periods of activity. The quarries of Llanymynech and Criggion, with the output of a good agricultural district, form its main support. Its passenger service being in a measure subservient to these others is liable to eccentricities which provide a topic for unseemly mirth to an ungrateful populace already forgetful of their quite recent periods of total isolation. Coloured post cards depicting the supposed lethargic progress of the "Llanymynech express" are sold in Shewsbury and the country post offices. A donkey is hitched in front of the labouring engine while the porters and passengers push behind the last carriage with other libellous pleasantries of a hyperbolic nature. If the prior claims of loading a truck with wheat or road metal give passengers an occasional hour or so of weary waiting at one or more of the little side stations, such trifling delays may well be accounted as nothing to the general utility of the line. Moreover, it crosses the Severn twice in the long and otherwise un-bridged stretch between Llandrinio and Montford near Shrewsbury. So those ready to adventure the mild

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perils of a railroad bridge get some further cause for thankfulness.

It was one of these that enabled me one day to walk across country from Coedway on the Shrewsbury road three miles below Llandrinio to Melverley, for at Coedway, a pleasant hamlet almost glorified by the upstanding background of the Breidden, there is a comfortable little inn of limited but snug and efficient accommodation. A couple of miles to the northern side of the Severn, springing abruptly out of the rich flattish country which stretches towards Baschurch, is a conspicuous rocky eminence thickly clad with timber. This is Nesscliff, another prominent landmark for miles around. The main Oswestry and Shrewsbury road runs immediately beneath it and a roomy old coaching inn stands handy for the visitor when the circuitous ascent of the beautifully wooded hill above has been accomplished. The rock formation is curious, while about 20 feet up the face of a precipitous cliff reached by steps cut in the soft red sandstone is a spacious cave divided into two apartments; and hereby hangs a tale. For in the early days of the Tudors this rude shelter was the headquarters not of an anchorite but of a famous outlaw, Humphrey Kynaston.

The said Humphrey was a member of the well-known border family of that name. He had been formerly constable of Myddle Castle but had lived there riotously, allowing the fabric and defences to go to wrack and ruin. Outlawed for debt he then took to the woods, and from his lair in the cave at Nesscliff made himself the terror of the surrounding country. Mellowed by the softening hand of time, the more picturesque escapades of this border Robin Hood have obscured his more evil and reckless deeds and remain the sole traditions of his turbulent performances in the country between Shrewsbury and the Breidden. The marches of Wales, the reader may need reminding, were not formed into counties till the reign of Henry VIII. Nearly the whole of Central and South Wales, with fragments of the present English border counties, was a mosaic of Palatinates under the virtually independent rule

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BRIEDDEN HILLS, FROM COEDWAY

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of Marcher barons who owed military fealty alone to the Sovereign and administered their little kingdoms as they would. The general turmoil of the Wars of the Roses made confusion worse confounded throughout these misgoverned units. Bandits, often the scions of good families, took to the woods and mountains and became the scourge of their respective districts. It was at this time and for the suppression of these disorders that the "Court of the Marches of Wales" was founded which developed later into the administrative body, which for nearly two centuries sat in Ludlow Castle and, till its utility ceased, more or less governed Wales and the border counties. Humphrey the Wild was in the direct descent from the Princes of Powys. His great-grandfather had married a daughter of the Earl of Northumberland and fallen by his brother-in-law, Hotspur's side, at the battle of Shrewsbury. His father was Sir Roger Kynaston, a staunch Yorkist, who for his doughty deeds was by Edward IV made constable of Harlech and sheriff for life of Merioneth as well as sheriff of Shropshire on two occasions. Our Nesscliff outlaw was the only son of this worthy by his second wife, a sister of Lord Powys of that day, and was born about 1466. The present Kynaston of Hardwick and Plas-y-dinas in Montgomeryshire is, I believe, his direct descendant.

Outlawed in 1491, extravagance, not misfortune, drove Humphrey the Wild to his cave at Nesscliff where the letters H. K., engraved on the wall soon after his death, at a ripe and apparently repentant old age, may still be seen. In such raiding adventures as tradition has preserved, a wonderful black horse named "Old Nick" figures freely. On one occasion, the sheriff having got wind that Humphrey was on the war-path beyond the Severn in the Shrewsbury district, made a big breach in the middle of Montford bridge, which then consisted of cross planks laid on stone piers and was as now the only one between Llandrinio and the county capital. Lying in concealment with his men he watched the returning and unsuspecting Humphrey ride on to the broken bridge, and then made a dash in full assurance of capturing the famous

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outlaw. But Humphrey, with the gallows behind him and the yawning gap in front as his only alternatives, chose the latter without hesitation, and putting Old Nick at the leap cleared it comfortably and galloped off to the dismay of the sheriff and his men. The performance so amazed the country people that they measured the gap in the bridge and cut its proportions upon the turf of Dovaston Heath together with the initials H. K., the letters being "an ell long a spade graff broad and a spade graff deep". Old Nick was stabled in one division of the cave, while Humphrey occupied the other. The horse was turned out to graze at night in the fields below, but was accustomed to return promptly at the sound of his master's whistle and climb the steps to his cavernous loose-box.

Wild Humphrey married twice, Welsh women in both cases, while the first at least, Isabel, was of the noblest Powysian blood. A very few years of the Kynaston regime at Myddle seems to have finished off the poor lady. She was a sister of the first Lloyd of Aston near Melverley, and tradition has it that on a certain occasion her husband made a friendly but unwelcome call on his brother-in-law, who could do no less than offer his kinsman a draught of wine. But he was unsuspecting enough to pour it into a valuable silver tankard, which Humphrey having drained clapped into his pocket and then setting spurs to his horse, cleared the gate, hurriedly closed against him, and galloped away. Another young woman, however, named Marion from Oswestry, and of humbler birth, was bold enough to take Isabel's place. But wearying of her in a short time, Humphrey seems to have despatched this second wife home again without ceremony. But the common-place Marion was destined to provide a further touch of romance to her husband's stormy record. For when the outlaw was dying, having apparently some time before made his peace with the authorities, he was attended by a certain wise woman who had made a reputation for leech craft in the Welshpool district. To this mysterious female he expressed a wish to see his neglected

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wife once more and obtain her forgiveness. Whereupon the identity of the first with that of the last-named woman was declared to the penitent, and the closing scene ended satisfactorily.

Humphrey the Wild, as a matter of fact, lived to a fairly ripe old age, and apparently retired in his later years to a little property he still possessed in Welshpool, and there peacefully abode under the protection of his high-placed Powys relatives. At any rate, in his will, dated 1534, he gave minute directions that he should be buried on the right-hand side of the chancel in St. Mary's Church, and there it is presumed his dust still lies. He had children by both marriages, and no doubt has plenty of remote descendants in the neighbourhood. So much for "Kinnyson who robbed the rich to give to the poor, and sold his soul to the Devil". The red hill of Nesscliff, with its winding paths, rocky stairways, and beautifully varied timber, is kept up by Lord Bradford and is altogether a pleasant place of pilgrimage for a summer afternoon. A ready method of accomplishing it on foot, from Shrewsbury for instance, is by the little Llanymynech railroad to Nesscliff station and thence through the pretty hamlet of Pentoc and over field paths. Its summit is known as "Oliver's outlook," the ubiquitous Protector having therefrom, says tradition, made a practical study of Welsh topography before he began to work the will of the Lord on that obstinately loyal corner of Britain.

Recrossing the Severn by the little railroad trestle bridge at Coedway just below its confluence with the Vyrnwy, the last opportunity of so doing for many a mile, there are two buildings of more or less ancient fame in the near neighbourhood. Both are now utilised as farm houses. One of them, Brigginton, is a fine gabled Tudor house of red sandstone, belonging to the Leightons of Loton, of whom anon. The interior has been stripped of some of its old fittings, which now, I believe, adorn a villa upon the Hudson or Ohio. The exterior has an air of neglect and decay and of that pathos which is more marked perhaps during these last flickers of life in a

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country seat already long broken with its past, than in a frankly abandoned ruin.

The other place of note, but a mile or two distant, is Wattlesborough Castle, so called from its situation on a branch of Watling Street, which is still traceable in the neighbourhood. Of feudal importance in the days of the Norman Conquest as part of the large domain of the Corbets of Caus, in later days it became the home of the Leightons, till they removed to Loton in the early eighteenth century. One only of the original four Norman towers remains, a low square structure flanked by a wing containing round-headed windows. These, with subsidiary buildings, have been for generations occupied as a farm house, the material from the other towers having been used for building the Leighton chapel in Alberbury Church. Close to Coedway, and over-looking the Shrewsbury road, stands an oak tree surrounded by an iron railing. This unwonted attention to a middle-aged way-side tree, removed too like this one out of reach of the very moderate traffic that uses this unimportant highway, might well give pause to the passing stranger. The fact is that the Anglo-Welsh boundary lies here and the great achievement of walking over it and plucking a spray from this much exalted oak was performed by George IV together with his brother William whilst visiting Loton in 1809. That this spasmodic recognition of the existence of his Welsh subjects portended any further interest in their country does not seem borne out by facts. But at any rate it pleased the unexacting and ecstatic locals, who blessed the tree, fenced it round, and made it thus memorable. One must admit that the circumstances savour of bathos when compared to that other oak which sheltered a prince, almost as unworthy of personal esteem though he may have been.

Just here upon the south bank of the Severn, which a mile away urges its now sullen and now babbling course through secluded pasture lands, is the village of Alberbury, lying at the park gates of Loton, the seat of the Leightons for some two hundred years, though in their possession for much longer than that. Loton stands between the road and the Severn in

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a beautifully-timbered demesne, while across the highway a large deer park stretches upwards and to the south. The foundation of the present house is the work of John Leighton, sheriff of Shropshire in 1468, though even by his time the family were of quite immemorial antiquity. He had probably just built it when he married the heiress of Wattlesborough and shifted his headquarters thither. The front portion of the house, otherwise charming and mellow in its Jacobean workmanship, is much disfigured by an obtrusive modern wing comprising a theatre built by the late Sir Baldwin Leighton. The back, looking over the gardens and parklands spreading toward the Severn, is obviously Queen Anne and marks no doubt the date of the first occupancy of the house as the chief family residence. Much of the material too for this later portion was brought from the abandoned Wattlesborough.

Many famous Leightons, some of them by famous painters, hang on the panelled walls of the chief apartments. Among these is one of the late Sir Frederick Leighton by himself and one of his father, who was a connection of the House, by the same hand. There is also a portrait of Charles I, presented to the family by Charles II, in recognition of their efforts in his father's cause. In contrast to these ornamental and distinguished folk is a picture of that "old, old, very old man," Parr. Two upstair chambers are still pointed out as those occupied by the Royal brothers during their above-mentioned visit to the neighbourhood. One of them with three doors in it was first allotted to the Prince Regent. But that pacific egotist, according to a tradition of the House, was so fearful of the opportunity thus offered to a potential assassin that he made his brother William exchange rooms with him. The confidence of the witty Charles expressed in the well-known jibe "No one would kill me to make thee (his brother James) king" would not perhaps have been justified here! The old entrance hall is an extremely fine one, and the immense size of the kitchen suggests the magnitude of the claims made upon it in the brave days of old.

At the edge of the Park near the high road stand the

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ivy-clad fragments of the keep and the long curtain wall of Alberbury castle. This was once the stronghold of that famous Anglo-Norman, Fulke Fitz-Warrene, whose performances on the Welsh Border and elsewhere, as set forth in that curious mediæval work, *The Romance of the Fitswarrenes*, give us a glimpse of life in the thirteenth century of a rather uncommonly intimate kind. I have dealt at length with this elsewhere but it is permissible at such a suggestive spot to recall how Fulke as a lad gave evidence of his mettle. For while playing chess with the future King John, then a boy of his own age, he caught his royal friend cheating, whereupon, snatching up the board, he hit him hard over the head with it, to the impotent rage of the spoiled cub who ran blubbering to his father King Henry, from whom, it is said, he got scant sympathy. Here too is Alberbury church, much restored, but rich in monuments and brasses commemorating Leightons, Lysters and Lloyds of Aston, who acquired this old Fitzwarrene manor of Alberbury. Behind and about the church the little village straggles, a pleasant medley of cottage, orchard, stackyard, and homestead set promiscuously upon twisting by-ways.

I passed through it one day in quest of The White Abbey which eventually revealed itself in the guise of a lonely farmhouse nearly two miles distant on the banks of the Severn and just lifted above flood mark. This, together with The Red Abbey, the site of which is passed on the way, commemorates a Benedictine Priory founded in the thirteenth century by Fulke Fitzwarrene. Its abbot was among those summoned to fight the Welsh in the wars of Henry III and Edward I. The Foundation was suppressed in the reign of Henry VI and made over to All-Souls College, Oxford. As the aforesaid homestead is almost unknown even to those curious in antiquities, and as I was myself fortified with what might be called an introduction, I encountered here none of that rather bored and even reluctant civility to which the harried tenants of some ancient places of note are occasionally reduced. What a relief it is when the status or circumstances of the long-suffering occupant permits of a frank charge for admission or at

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least of refreshments upon a business footing! But the good wife of this unpretentious farm-house, that consists in great part of the old monastic building, had never been thus harried. I don't think she encountered this form of distraction once in a blue moon, though fully conscious of the significance of the thick walls and massive vaulted roofs which kept her milk crocks cool in hot weather and mitigated the cold of winter. She left her milk pans literally in this case with friendly alacrity and after we had discussed that unfailing topic of the country, the domestic inefficiency of the rising generation, she showed me over the house, which is not large, and save for some old doorways and a vaulted roof is of interest rather from the fact of what it once was than for any detail of construction or ornament. Afterwards I strolled down to the river over a pasture browned by many weeks of rainless sunshine along whose fringe the depleted Severn gurgled wearily between its here open meadowy banks.

Even the most recent maps have a deplorable habit of sprinkling the word Ferry here and there along the course of the Severn where no such thing exists or has not existed within reasonable memory. Led thus astray more than once in my natural endeavours to reach some place a mile or two distant without a detour of ten to fifteen miles I discovered that all these conveniences were matters of ancient history, so ancient in more than one case that the oldest inhabitant available couldn't recall their existence. In another I was told that the nearest farmer had a fishing boat but that it was at present full of water! In a third, full of hope, I made confidently for a lane marked clearly on the map not only as leading to a ferry but without any other reason for its existence. The lane was there sure enough but choked shoulder high with the rank growth of years, and an elderly stone-breaker near its exit to the highway could not remember either the lane or the ferry being in use.

Bearing in mind that the Severn here is a comparatively narrow river, which in many places a reasonable expert could throw a fly across, and further that there are frequent interludes

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of spreading gravelly shallow between its sombre deeps, it is astonishing how it divides communities and bars all intercourse. The shallows, in truth, are not quite what they seem, even in a dry summer. There is always a deep runnel somewhere between the two banks. You may get nearly across in low water, with little more than wet feet, and then comes the inevitable deep run, often but a yard or two wide, and usually under the opposite bank, to baffle your promising endeavours. As a social barrier between the populace on either side of it the Severn through several parishes, of which I think it is nearly always the boundary, must be entirely effective. There can be little marrying or giving in marriage across this gentle, and in summer unobtrusive-looking, stream. No one but a young Lochinvar could successfully court a lady on the opposite bank unless he owned one of the rare fishing boats and it had not been washed away, as seems customary, by the latest flood. There must be plenty of people living on the south side of the Severn who have never in their lives set foot in villages so near them that they can hear a dog bark or the children shouting in the school yard. It would be interesting to trace the cleavage made by this long stretch of the Severn, in the names, connections, traditions, nay possibly even in the very dialect of the people living upon either side of it. Perhaps this severance was less marked in former times; for there is nothing doing on the river now and very few habitations stand on its banks. There is, to be sure, a little netting for salmon by the licence-holders, and though the catches are only moderate they have much improved of late. The fish are even less inclined to take a bait than in the higher Welsh reaches, and, as there, quite resolutely refuse the fly—an eccentricity for which the scientific ichthyologist can give no sufficient reason.

About two miles down the river from Alberbury and a little further away from it stands Rowton Castle in its finely timbered park. In all the essentials it ranks in past importance with its next neighbour, Loton. Camden calls it "the oldest castle in Shropshire". Architecturally, indeed, it has some ad-

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vantage over Loton, namely, in an interesting fifteenth century round tower, while the remainder of the old part of the castle is of the Jacobean period. Here too is a noble lime avenue. Like much of this district it was Corbet property after the Conquest, coming later to the Le Stranges, in whose time the original castle was destroyed by Prince Llewelyn while waging the war in which Edward I completed the conquest of Wales. Le Strange had his revenge, for it was he who in that ever memorable skirmish at Builth a little later encompassed the death of the unfortunate Welsh prince. In the fifteenth century Rowton fell to the Lysters. During the civil war, Thomas of that name being a Royalist prisoner at Shrewsbury, his wife, like so many other gallant ladies of both sides, held her husband's castle against the enemy, represented in this case by the Shropshire general, Mytton, and obtained good terms. After all, what a humanely conducted war was this, having regard to the period and the acute controversies that brought it about! What a change from that of the Roses, and yet more, what a contrast to the contemporary methods of Continental Europe! The traditional British humanity in war, we may fairly boast, is not a growth of recent date.

In recent times Rowton was the property of the late Montague Corry, afterwards Lord Rowton, so well known in his day as Lord Beaconsfield's intimate friend and Private Secretary, and it still remains in the family. Opposite Rowton, and about two miles away, though it might be fifty as regards connection or intercourse, is the small village of Shrawardine, standing on the further or left bank of the Severn. It approaches nearer to the river than any place of habitation since we crossed the Welsh border at Llandrinio. The church would, I think, arrest the steps of no wayfarer; it suggests neither merit nor antiquity. The village too is insignificant, straggling and a trifle melancholy. The Severn, though so near, is not visible from the roadway but steals after its fashion between high willowy banks, forming just here a salmon pool of some repute. Perhaps I was out of humour on the occasion of my visit to Shrawardine and disinclined to view its brighter

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side. It was, moreover, an uncompromisingly dour day. On a later and sunnier occasion when strolling upon the sloping meadows just across the river, below the village of Ford, so near and yet so far from Shrawardine, the latter looked much more cheerful. The church tower, though not much to boast of, rose picturesquely above the foliage, and the river, winding towards a woodland reach below, made a pleasing foreground. I had certainly over-rated Shrawardine—pronounced, by the way, Shrad'n—in a material sense, and counted on it for lunch, misled by the map which printed its name in imposing type. "Is there no inn here?" I inquired of a passing labourer. "No, Sir, there is not," said he, in tones which suggested a rankling grievance on that account. "Well, there's a ferry, isn't there?"—for a hospitable roof at Ford, which village lay not far across the river, promised a solution of the difficulty. "No, Sir, there's no ferry. The farmer over yonder has a fishing boat tied up somewhere but I believe it's got water in it. There's nothing at Shrad'n, Sir, ne'er an inn nor a ferry, nor even a shop. There's no chance to spend a penny here." There was no doubt in the world that this particular inhabitant, who spoke with the Midland Cockney intonation and was obviously not a son of the soil, considered that his lines had been cast in grievous places. There are the remains, however, of a feudal castle in "Shrad'n," three shapeless blocks of masonry standing on a low hump in the paddock of a large homestead, and surrounded by grass-grown ramparts.

There was no doubt a ford here in olden days, and this once important fortress guarded it, commanding at the same time a wide view of the Briedden and the Welsh hills. It was built by Henry I for purely military purposes against the Welsh, and the surrounding landowners were laid under contribution for its maintenance. The Welsh destroyed it in the time of John, but, being afterwards granted to the Fitz Alans, it was re-built and renamed Castle Isobel after several ladies bearing that name who married into their family. In the time of Elizabeth the castle was sold to that insatiable landbuyer Sir Thomas Bromley, the founder of a family which

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we shall hear more of lower down the Severn. While in their possession it was garrisoned and defended for the Royalists by Sir William Vaughan who held out so stoutly that he earned the soubriquet of "the Devil of Shrawardine". It was ultimately captured by treachery and destroyed, its materials being taken to Shrewsbury and used in the town walls.

These are but a few brief items in the history of a fortress that played no inconsiderable part in its day. A great ash tree on one side and a large walnut on the other now share its deserted site with the sparse remaining fragments of the walls that in their time have sheltered kings and queens, knights and barons, roundheads and cavaliers. A herd of milk cows, obviously fresh from some burned-up pasture field, tore greedily when I was there at the rank grass clothing fosse and rampart. No one, so far as I know, ever turns aside from the twisting, little-travelled by-way that connects Shrawardine with the outer world, to bestow even a passing glance on this forgotten relic of Border wars. A large sedgy mere close at hand had its uses no doubt for the Baronial owners of Shrawardine. It is now chiefly conspicuous for the bright gleam it makes in the middle distance of that fine eastward prospect from the top of the Breidden, already alluded to. Shire-reeve-weodine is supposed to be the original name of the place, thus marking it as the residence of the Saxon Sheriffs. The Severn here leaves its lonely flats for a pleasant undulating country with woods here and there dipping to its surface. Ford, lying some half a mile back from the river, is, *qua* village, but a diminutive place, but within its broad parochial bounds are many pleasant nooks and delectable habitations of all degrees. The church stands picturesquely upon a high knoll above a stream commanding a wide view. It is an interesting and beautiful little building of the local red sandstone and dates back to the twelfth century. It boasts a screen of lovely design, which is thought to have been carved in the time of Henry VIII. The roof is also striking and the general proportions of the building are perfect. Three stained windows

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by Kemp, lately inserted, add much to the beauty of the church.

After dividing the secluded community of Shrawardine from the more cheerful purlieus of Ford, the Severn becomes altogether more sociable and runs under the old stone arches of Montford bridge, around which, only three miles from Shrewsbury by road, a considerable village clusters. The importance of this bridge and its predecessors among the approaches to Shrewsbury from the Welsh side has already been indicated by "Wild Humphrey's" marvellous leap.

After this brief glimpse of the world and passing touch with the traffic of a main highway into North Wales, the Severn returns once more to its secluded though now more romantic meanderings. These last, indeed, from here to the further side of Shrewsbury, are of the most eccentrically sinuous kind. Two miles below Montford bridge, just when you might take it for granted that the river, on a short south-east course, was now fairly started for Shrewsbury, it suddenly changes its mind, makes an abrupt dart to the north, and after wandering round the country for five or six miles in loop-like fashion, returns to within a few hundred yards of its point of departure. Here, at this narrow neck, like the handle of a frying-pan, is the entrance to the compact river-girt estate of an ancient Shropshire family, the Sandfords of the Isle, which may be roughly likened to the pan itself. This is in fact the only approach to it, as the encircling river is bridgeless and unfordable. Formerly it was known as the Isle of Rossal, being in remoter days the possession of a family of that name. The present house is early Georgian with a good oak staircase and panelled rooms throughout; the upper ones commanding a fine prospect of the wide-circling Severn. Within a stone's-throw still stands the half-timbered house which preceded the present one as the family residence, while on a long woody knoll, washed by the river, not far away are well-defined traces of the original moated mansion of the Rossals. The park slopes down some distance northward of the house to a large

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shallow mere, and beyond the river again rise the woods of Leaton.

From the uplifted neck of this peninsula of The Isle the Severn, returning from its rambling circuit, displays itself to great advantage as it streams round the base of low luxuriant woody hills towards Shrewsbury. Ross House, a small seat of the Harleys of Brampton Brian, but an interesting old Jacobean house, looks down upon the river from high ground upon the right bank, while upon the left farther away the comparatively modern mansion of Berwick stands conspicuous on the site of the older house of the Bettons, famous as Hotspur's last resting-place before his death at the battle of Shrewsbury. A mile or so short of the town, at the junction of the two main roads from Ford and Montford bridge respectively and just south of the river, stands in a private garden the wreck of that old, old tree "the Shelton oak," about which such controversies have raged—if the destruction of a mythical and calumnious tradition by irrefutable historical facts can be called a controversy. A portion of its huge and hoary trunk still grips the earth beneath the green lawn on which it stands, though now at last, I believe, quite dead. When I first knew it, it still nourished with tenacious vitality a few living shoots, just enough at any rate to show that life was not yet quite extinct and that the years were still being piled up in this last extremity of its unconscionable age. It will be enough for the moment to mention that the legend associated with the Shelton oak for all time, and mentioned even by Leland, had it that Owen Glyndwr witnessed the battle of Shrewsbury, in which he had promised to take part, from its branches, a picturesque fiction that will be briefly disposed of in the next chapter. A well-known Shrewsbury historian, however, discovered a title-deed prior to the battle of Shrewsbury in which occur these words "the grete oak at Shelton standeth on my ground," apparently indicating that the tree was celebrated for its stature over a century before Glyndwr was born! Passing later through the ancient suburb of Frankwell, for it dates back to Saxon times, in which are still a good sprinkling

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of old half-timbered houses, the three main roads from the Welsh marches now unite and enter Shrewsbury by the Welsh bridge, built about a century ago, in place of that quaint old-gated structure which echoed so often through the long years to the tramp of armed men.

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CHAPTER VI

SHREWSBURY

BEFORE treating of this ancient town, the first place of high importance encountered in descending the Severn, let it be emphatically stated that the correct form of pronunciation is *Shrosebury* not *Shroosebury*. The obstinacy with which the mass even of enlightened people outside these border counties refuse to realise the time-honoured usage is quite curious. This lapse from orthodoxy in the case of an educated person merely reveals him as devoid of even an elementary acquaintance with the noble county of Salop. But it is something more than advisable that, if he proposes to cultivate one, he should take this apparent trifle to heart. It is not well for any one of the class which is expected to speak the King's English, to go *Shrooseburying* about Shropshire, not merely because it is tantamount to assuming that the natives of his own degree do not know how to pronounce the name of their own county town, but for a further reason which, if appreciated, would doubtless prove even more effective, namely, that *Shroosebury* has unfortunately in recent times been widely adopted by the local proletariat and is not merely an error but a rank vulgarism. There is, of course, no reason why a free man should pay any regard to his aspirates or why he should not call Derby *Durby*, if he chooses, for he would even then belong to an overwhelming majority of the British public. But my readers will chiefly, I take it, belong to the minority; and should they turn their steps towards Salopia will prefer the speech of the enlightened to that of the porter, the cabman, the agricultural labourer, or even the young ladies behind shop counters or refreshment bars. I do not

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know when this lapse of the proletariat from orthodoxy began. But if not actually originated, it is quite sure to have been encouraged by the alien Board school teacher and is precisely the sort of thing in which he would delight. Immigrants too from the Midlands or London, whose Cockney or Midland-Cockney would miscall almost any name which gave them an opportunity, have done no doubt their share in corrupting the more untutored portion of the inhabitants.

The vulgar nowadays, like the less blameworthy alien, gentle or simple, fairly revel in mispronouncing the name of their own town, and by implication will even correct the purist on every possible occasion. So the wandering stranger, inquiring with conscious rectitude the road to *Shrosebury*, must not be disheartened by the backsliding of the walking postman, or the grocer's boy. "*Shroosebury*, sir? Keep straight on for *Shroosebury*." The powers of darkness will possibly in the end prevail. Perhaps Shrewsbury school may help to keep the lamp burning.

After all this it seems incumbent to state that Schrobesberi, or "the place of scrub," is the derivation of the name, indicating, if such further proof were needed, the Saxon origin of the town. Neither Roman nor Briton had any very substantial hand in its foundation, which was mainly owing to the complete destruction by the Saxon invaders of the important Roman British city of Uriconium (Wroxeter), to whose remains Sabrina herself will in due course conduct us. It is true that the river-encircled site of Shrewsbury, before this ruthless Saxon raid destroyed the "White city" (Uriconium), bore the name of Pengwern and seems to have been the seat of a certain Powys chieftain, Cynddelw, celebrated by his contemporary Llywerch Hen in passionate lamentations over the wrecked city lower down the Severn. Whatever Pengwern then amounted to, it was apparently treated soon afterwards in the same ruthless fashion, and as a part of Mercia remained more or less derelict till the Anglo-Saxons began to shed their native prejudices against anything in the shape ot a town, and draw together upon its advantageous site.

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But Saxon Shrewsbury must have been of slight importance compared with that which it assumed after the Norman Conquest, when a rough estimate from Domesday entries would give it only about a thousand inhabitants. The Welsh and Saxons once they had settled down to more or less definite boundaries, worried each other far less than did the Welsh and Anglo-Normans in later days during the two centuries of Norman aggression which led up to the final conquest. The importance of Shrewsbury really began with the building in 1071 by Roger de Montgomery, the relative and powerful abettor of William the Conqueror, of the great castle which in its shrunken proportions still dominates the town. The historic glory of Shrewsbury is coterminous with that of the Welsh wars, from the Norman Conquest till the time of Edward I, or indeed till the suppression of the long struggle with Owen Glyndwr, during which it was a constant point of danger and base of operations. Till then almost every king of England had been a familiar and mail-clad figure within its walls, and most of the Welsh princes in every attitude from that of triumph to despair had passed through its gates. With the close of these stirring times Shrewsbury subsided into the rôle of an important provincial town, the capital of a rich and beautiful agricultural county and a good deal more than that, since it might well be termed one of the capitals of Wales. Within the memory of living men the Welsh tongue was conspicuous at its fairs and markets, and indeed may be heard even to this day on any of these greater occasions.

The town stands on rising ground within a loop of the Severn, as nearly completed to the circle as that at The Isle just above and more literally of a horse-shoe shape. In the neck, and lifted high above the river, the Castle keep of Roger de Montgomery still bravely rears two Norman drum towers and an embattled curtain. Below it a long section of the old town walls stands yet intact with an interval of meadow and open garden ground stretching significantly from the river to their base. To deal with Shrewsbury, so rich in relics of

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the past and richer still in story, within the compass of a chapter is a rather intimidating business; while an acquaintance renewed again and again over much of a lifetime does anything but simplify the task. Nearly twenty years ago, in a book touching indirectly on the Shropshire capital, I made what I am sure was then the justifiable statement that few travellers, particularly Americans, turned their steps hither. A marked change has since come over the scene, and visitors of all kinds may now be encountered in its streets upon any summer day. Most of them, no doubt, are attracted by its æsthetic qualities, its profusion of old timbered houses, its beautiful old churches, its feudal remains, which in this case seem to gather further significance from a situation in full view of the long mountainous frontier of Wales. Not many perhaps can be expected to feel all that Shrewsbury stands for. How should they, even though it has been more fortunate than most places in the efforts of its lettered sons to set forth its full significance in accessible fashion? It is enough that so many signs and tokens of its crowded past remain to draw the visitor from point to point and sustain his interest in the superficial and the artistic, at any rate, and awaken just so much of that rarer possession, the historic instinct, as he may peradventure have within him. But tags of history without any clue to their context must of a truth be dull enough to the unimaginative and the ill-equipped or even to the more receptive soul for whom the pageants of the past have had no particular significance. To feel the full spirit of mediæval Shrewsbury some knowledge of the contemporary story of Wales is almost indispensable, so intimate was the action of the Principality upon the walled town that lay face to face with it. Of this it is unfortunately indisputable that almost no one outside Wales has the faintest glimmering. Glyndwr is to most English people but a semi-barbarous personage out of Shakespeare. The various Llewelyns are merged into a single shadowy figure representing the last Prince of Wales, unfortunate and patriotic ruler of a vaguely pictured homogeneous and united country, a romantic person-

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age who incidentally in happier and more leisurely moments had inadvertently killed a faithful hound, as the destroyer instead of, as he proved to be, the guardian of his infant child. As for the rest of the Welshmen and their story, it all appears, I fancy, even to the wise man from the East, a jumble of sanguinary deeds and unpronounceable names, though as a matter of fact these last are for the most part remarkably sonorous.

Mediæval Shrewsbury suffered from no such fogginess. It knew them all by name, sometimes personally and too well, and precisely what each one amounted to. If its stones could speak, they would have a great deal to say that is not found in school histories of England or even in much more ambitious works on that same subject. Fortunately, there are things more eloquent than stones to preserve for us in some measure the story of these old Welsh Princes and chieftains who made Shrewsbury a place of arms and a fighting town for so many generations, and in peaceful interludes a prosperous mart for the cattle and sheep and cheese and wool of that mosaic of native principalities and Anglo-Norman palatinates which comprised mediæval Wales. But even before these times Shrewsbury and its shire had produced a hero who impressed himself so strongly on the local fancy that he still lives in its folk-lore and astonishes the credulous even yet by periodical visits to the scene of his activities nine hundred years ago. This is Edric or Cedric the Wild, one of those few powerful Saxon Thanes who gave William so much trouble in spite of his apparent efforts to attach them. For Edric roused the Welsh as well as the Border Saxons and kept the field for two or three years, though he failed to take Shrewsbury Castle. The Conqueror won him over in the end and ultimately took him to the Scottish Wars.

Edric's career, however, included a mysterious incident, and it is this, no doubt, rather than his comparatively commonplace heroism, which has left him so uneasy in his grave. For while hunting one day in the forest of Clun or on the Stretton hills he fell in with a damsel of such bewitching

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beauty that he carried her off by force and married her on the spot, though she confessed to being of other than mortal clay. Apparently quite pleased with himself for having married a faery, above all one of such unearthly beauty, he took her up to London and showed her off to the King and his Court. After some years, however, Edric spoke inadvertently the cross word which by the ethics of Welsh legendary lore is supposed to dissolve these elfin wives into thin air, and off she went. But he has obviously rejoined her in the world of spirits. For, when a great war is brooding, they are to be seen together on the Longmynd by the faithful, galloping towards that point of the compass whence the danger is coming. So far as I know, they have been quiet since the eve of the Crimean War, when the dread pair were encountered by a maid-servant of Miss Burne, the Shropshire folk-lorist. She was walking with her father on the moor, when the blast of a bugle horn smote upon their startled ears. The man told his daughter to cover her face all but her eyes lest she go mad. Then Edric and his faery wife swept by, the former leading on a white horse. According to this circumstantial evidence, his eyes were bright and black, his hair dark and curly. He wore a green cap with white feathers, a short green coat and cloak; while a horn and short sword hung from a golden belt. The lady had wavy golden hair falling to her waist and round her forehead was clasped a white band decorated with a golden ornament. The rest of her attire was green, with a short dagger hanging from her girdle. They were riding towards the north. The girl's father, it appears, had seen them in his boyhood, before the final struggle with Napoleon. They were then heading for the south. So much for the last Saxon Earl of Shrewsbury or Shropshire. It would be interesting to know if the ghostly pair turned up in July, 1914, since, that is to say, these pages were mainly written. If not, we may safely assume that their uneasy spirits are at last irrevocably laid.

Parliaments were held at Shrewsbury in these early days and many armies started thence against the rebellious Welsh,

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who drove their cattle into the Snowdon mountains and ambushed the slower-moving labouring English columns, till lack of provender, or floods and storms, drove them, in Shakespeare's words, "weather beaten home and bootless back". But Shrewsbury was only once actually captured, and that was by Llewelyn ap Iorweth, generally known as Llewelyn the Great, who alone of all her Princes really united under one banner the then jealous factions of North Wales, Powys, and the South. This was a mightier man than even his grandson, the last and better known Prince of the North Walian line. He married a daughter of King John, which did not, however, restrain him from smiting the Border almost uninterruptedly for 40 years and throwing his considerable weight against his egregious father-in-law and his wife's brother, Henry III, in the Baron's wars. The Salopians prudently bought off Glyndwr or he would have been right on top of them, and Heaven knows what might have become of those noble churches which are their pride to-day; for Owen had an unpardonable weakness in that direction.

Broadly speaking, the heart of Shrewsbury with its more important buildings, streets and business quarters, ancient and modern, forms its highest point. From this the rest of the town, though everywhere rich in quaint architectural survivals of the past, slopes down gradually upon all sides but one, where there is a parallel ridge, to the encircling Severn. From the railway station the busy thoroughfare of Castle Street leads sharply up in a five minutes' walk to Pride Hill, the heart of the town. For here, on the site of the present Post Office, stood the Cross beside which so much blood, noble and ignoble, was ceremoniously spilled in the days of old. Well-furnished shops, not less inviting from having been sometimes compelled to adapt themselves to the exigencies of picturesque many-cornered old buildings, give way as you mount the street to more inspiring interludes. For on one side, standing back behind a well-ordered square of railed-in turf and presided over by a statue of that famous Salopian, Charles Darwin, is the fine old front of Shrewsbury school,

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preserved since the latter's removal to its new site, as a free library and museum for the town. Alongside of it and of lower elevation is the residence that, as occupied successively for over seventy years by those illustrious scholars and teachers, Samuel Butler and Kennedy, must be objects of high regard to many others than Salopians.

Nearly opposite is the entrance to the castle, whose square keep, with round corner towers, is now occupied as a private residence. Behind here again, and flanking the castle, are one or two delightful old houses, with charming bowery gardens, wedged in, as it were, among the old town defences, and, like the castle, looking down upon the town and river. Just here too the gateway of the Council House, perhaps the gem of Shrewsbury, confronts the street. The walls of the house itself have been included in later residences, but its interior was the place of meeting for the Council of the Marches of Wales when they visited Shrewsbury from their headquarters at Ludlow Castle. But the gateway remains intact, facing the street, a beautiful specimen of profusely-decorated, half-timbered work erected in 1620. Both sides of the now wide street as we approach the crown of the hill look comparatively modern, but Mr. Forrest of Shrewsbury, who has made a long study of its old houses, states that most of them have Jacobean or Queen Anne work behind their more recent fronts. In one of them resided for some time Mrs. Fitzherbert, the morganatic wife of George IV, as it was owned by her Shropshire relations. *The Raven*, the outstanding county hotel, is now since railroad times, modern, and in truth rather depressing architecturally both inside and out. It has had in the past, however, almost a monopoly of the high-class business, both local and alien, and is familiar throughout Wales and the Marches. Since the stranger discovered Shrewsbury, however, rivals have arisen that in spite of an old tradition, which has so long recognised its supremacy, may prove formidable. The modern traveller is not inclined to hug traditions, and will be still less so during the next decade.

But the old *Raven* which preceded the modern building

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was a famous hostelry since time began in Shrewsbury, though perhaps out-rivalled in the coaching and posting days by *The Lion*, which has long ceased, I think, to be fashionable. *The Raven* is the scene of Farquhar's well-known eighteenth century play, *The Recruiting Officer*. The chief figure in this, Captain Plume, is generally supposed to represent the author himself, and is certainly drawn from his own experiences. It is dedicated to "All friends round the Wreken," coupled with grateful eulogies of the Salopians, and as a picture of that side of life in a provincial town two hundred years ago is valuable.

Pride-Hill, which this main street of Shrewsbury now becomes as it achieves the summit and the heart of the town, bears no fortuitous name but merely that of a conspicuous family whose members served the borough in many important ways in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and themselves inhabited and doubtless owned this portion of it. The number of half-timbered and often highly-decorative houses that here and all about here confront the visitor, mostly linked up as they are by the local historians with the men and events of bygone days, is too great for individual notice. Butcher Row, a paved wynd which leads off this main street, is possibly unique in England. At any rate, it is the particular glory of Shrewsbury for its unbroken line on both sides of sixteenth and seventeenth century half-timbered buildings. You might almost shake hands across it from the projecting galleries which confront each other along portions of this curious, narrow way. Still numerous by modern reckoning as are these survivals in Shrewsbury, there must have been during the middle and earlier part of the last century a wholesale destruction of them. From sketches and engravings of this and other parts of the town one realises what architectural treasures, according to the taste of our generation, have vanished, and that too so recently. Indeed, when I realise that I myself must have frequently looked upon many of these now obliterated scenes, though with the undiscerning eyes of childhood and youth, it is borne in on one how deplorable it all is that some chance should not have hastened by so brief

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a span of years the modern awakening to their æsthetic value, and that the vandalism of our fathers and grandfathers could not have been arrested for so brief a moment.

We are not perfect yet by any means, but we are regenerate compared with our immediate forbears, who built pagan temples for churches and wiped out Tudor and Jacobean buildings by the hundred with an almost savage joy, and, worse still, with a full sense of good work achieved. There are formidable people like this still in every country town but they are generally of a class who have the excuse of knowing no better, and there is at least an enlightened opposition, even though it may not always be a successful one. But Shrewsbury is now, I think, fairly conscious of its remaining treasures. Many houses are erected upon the black-and-white model, and though the visitor naturally passes them by and even sniffs at them as modern or "faked," one should be thankful rather for such praise-worthy efforts after harmony.

Near here too, on this central plateau, is the spacious market-place, where in Georgian days the political and patriotic fervour of this border country has expressed itself so often and so turbulently. The election of 1774 is a favourite memory with Salopian chroniclers, as the great Lord Clive, who, everyone knows, was a Shropshire man and for some years member for Shrewsbury, was re-elected at the head of the poll. And this, too, in spite of the obloquy which was then being cast upon him by a strong faction throughout the country. Within a month of this election, however, broken in health and spirit, the great pro-consul died by his own hand. Among the long list of those who on this historic spot have wooed with success the then limited and unblushingly bribed voters of Shrewsbury is the youthful Disraeli. If his foppish exterior provoked the ridicule of the House of Commons one can almost hear the guffaws that must have stirred the market-place of Shrewsbury in 1841. But elections were profitable entertainments to borough voters in those days, and jovial ones for the thirsty crowd. The taste of the Shrewsbury electors, had such things been a matter of taste and not

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mainly of cash, must have been catholic indeed. For that egregious spendthrift "Jack Mytton," who squandered a great estate by such a series of preposterous escapades as secured him the honour of a biography which is still sometimes quoted, was another of their choices.

Around the market-place are planted most of the official buildings. In its centre stands a bronze statue of Clive by Marochetti, and towards the south side is the fine old market hall, with an arcade and mullioned windows, bearing the arms of Queen Elizabeth and the date 1596 upon its west front. This building replaced an older one, and an inscription upon its north face states that it was "begonne" in 1595 by William Jones and Thomas Charlton Gent, then Bailiffs. Just above is a statue of Richard, Duke of York, father of Edward IV, which formerly stood upon the old Welsh bridge, demolished in 1791. Though still used for certain purposes, the market business has been moved to the hideous red building in the Mardol not far away, the erection of which some forty odd years ago wiped out many fine old houses. The High Street, formerly *Baxter's Row*, crosses the north end of the market square. Here is Ireland's mansion, one of the finest of the numerous old timbered buildings. Though now divided into three tenements, the house still retains its character and symmetry. The front exhibits four rows of bow windows, the two middle ones projecting over the shops beneath. These are quaintly barred in form and some of the beams are moulded. The Irelands, who hailed from Oswestry in the beginning of the sixteenth century, seem to have been for generations a powerful burgher family, though we must be always careful not to apply to these earlier periods the distinction which in later ones arose between the purely burgess and, in modern parlance, "the county family". This is a comparatively recent development, which arose gradually from a number of causes—among which the continental idea probably counted for something—about the time of George II. The keynote is the attitude towards trade. In the Baronial period, which terminated in the sanguinary Wars

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of the Roses, there was neither room nor reason for any such discrimination. During the Tudor period, with its hosts of "new families" and the uplifting of the country gentry to a higher sphere of influence, social contempt for trade as such was simply an unknown quantity. There is no trace either in the habits or the correspondence of domestic England before the eighteenth century of this Continental feeling towards commerce which was there the natural concomitant of a rigidly preserved and privileged noblesse. The great English historic families of that day had, of course, no occasion to concern themselves with such matters, though the nobles of the Court, lay and clerical, constantly exchanged hospitalities with the magnates of the city, and must have had far more in common with them than with a country squire. But the leading goldsmiths, mercers, victuallers of London were then, as often as not, members of respectable landed families, and wore their coats of arms as a matter of course. It would never have occurred to their relatives in Shropshire, for instance, to be ashamed of them on account of their mercantile pursuits. On the contrary, they would have deemed themselves extremely fortunate in getting a younger son into their business. For younger sons in those days had to take much humbler jobs than that, and did so without the faintest sense of hardship or humiliation. They followed country trade, such as it was, as brewers, tanners, timber merchants, millers, maltsters or farmers, and constantly kept shops, though often, to be sure, they went to the colonies or into the Church. Some climbed to fame up the ladder of the law and founded families of their own. But the bar was expensive and reserved rather for elder sons or the cadets of the greater houses. It should, moreover, be remembered that families in these days were large, a dozen children not being regarded as an exceptionally full quiver.

During the eighteenth century other notions crept in for reasons that will probably occur to anyone with sufficient interest or equipment in the subject. It is fair to say that they were of alien importation modified to suit a rather

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uncongenial soil. At any rate, what may be called "the army, church and bar" tradition is quite a modern thing. Indeed, anyone who could imagine such a shibboleth applying to the Tudor and Jacobean periods must be destitute of even an elementary acquaintance with the England of a former day. That a misconception of these matters, however, is widespread is beyond dispute, and the delusion, we may suppose, will never die. An Englishman's interest in such matters is comparatively languid. But it wouldn't be safe to tell ninety-nine Scotsmen out of a hundred that it was a common thing for long after the Union for landless persons of quality to keep a shop in Edinburgh without any loss of caste, though the hundredth Scotsman—if the estimate is not too generous—who is familiar with the social history of his own country, knows it to be a mere literal fact. While to suggest to a Highlander of condition even more prickly on these subjects, that tavern-keeping—and such taverns!—was quite an aristocratic industry with his forbears would be sheer recklessness though equally incontrovertible.

Prebendary Auden, in his work on Shrewsbury, makes some interesting remarks, more or less pertinent to this subject, and draws attention to the number of mayors and aldermen of the town who were members of what, in more recent times, would be known as county families. There is, of course, nothing strange in this. It is inevitable and, more or less, common to every provincial town. But he makes a further point of rather greater novelty in the fact that several heads of landed families, as late as the Georgian period, made Shrewsbury their chief place of residence. Many of them had town houses here, as had, of course, the country squires all over England in their respective capitals. But one is accustomed to regard these as temporary abodes for special occasions, or for a short portion of the year, and no doubt the winter season in most cases. But in Shropshire the town house seems to have been rather more than this with some families. These provincial seasons must have been uncommonly jolly ones, particularly for the ladies, one

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might fancy, in view of the absence of what we now understand by roads. But seeing the part that prolonged carousing played among the men of those days, I have no doubt such frequent opportunities were welcome enough to them. For this semi-urban life entailed no deprivation of outdoor winter sports, as packs of hounds were brought to town and met constantly in the neighbourhood, not only in the case of Shrewsbury, but in that of other county capitals when enjoying their gay season. Even remote Pembrokeshire gathered its squirearchy, hounds and all, into Haverfordwest for the winter season.

Owen's mansion, of very similar construction to Ireland's, with overhanging storeys and elaborately carved barge-boards, carries two inscriptions which proclaim it to have been erected by *Richard Owen the Elder gent AD 1592.* Close to the old Market Hall is the Lloyd mansion, another well-preserved, half-timbered house, bearing the date 1570 and the initials D L, with the arms of the Lloyds of Marrington. The Vaughan mansion, a stone building, on College-hill, behind the market-place, is probably the oldest private residence in Shrewsbury, as it dates back to the fourteenth century. For several centuries, till a comparatively late date, it belonged to the Myttons. It has been, however, re-fronted and cut up, and only the old hall and steps of the original house survive. But to discourse on all the old houses of Shrewsbury is quite outside the scope of this chapter, while to merely tabulate them would be meaningless. Moreover, the visitor will find more than one excellent account of them procurable at the local book shops.

Besides these old Tudor and half-timbered buildings Shrewsbury is probably as rich as almost any provincial town in Queen Anne and early Georgian work. Being still largely occupied as private residences they lie more often in the quieter thoroughfares, sometimes concealing behind them spacious and mellow gardens, as is the way of their kind in English towns. The gabled Tudor house, on the other hand, and for obvious reasons, is generally found in the heart of a town,

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doing duty as a shop or an inn. The others of a later date, having been built further out, and perhaps better suited to do so, still play the part for which they were erected or at least the only less dignified one of lawyers' or merchants' offices.

The civic glory of Shrewsbury, however, is the Quarry, a public park that slopes gently from the southern ridge of the town to the Severn and contains cross avenues of magnificent limes, only rivalled, it is locally claimed, by the famous avenue at Trinity, Cambridge. The river washes the foot of it in fairly deep and sober current while pursuing its encircling course around the town. And as the opposite hill springs up sharply in a grassy well-timbered slope to the high plateau of Kingsland on which the school now stands, the whole scene is a quite effective combination of charm and dignity. Here too is annually held the greatest provincial flower show in England. Originated like a hundred others about half a century ago, it is now such a tremendous two-day function that people come to it from all over England, and half Shrewsbury lies awake at night for a month beforehand in feverish dread of the elements. Nor is this surprising, as they are so traditionally adverse on this critical occasion that its approach puts heart into the Shropshire farmer when groaning under a drought. From every part of the Welsh Borderland, packed like herrings in a barrel, rain or sunshine, come the Borderers, not always thus impelled by a passion for begonias or calceolarias but simply because "The flower show" as an institution is an inevitable incident in their year's programme. For here they not only meet one another but see strangers from every part of England. They also see fireworks and hear bands of the first quality. Some of them go round the flowers, which, in truth, are a wonderful display. Everyone in Shrewsbury and near by entertains, and it is all very festive, even on those frequent occasions when it rains.

The river here, between the Welsh and English bridges, forms the boating course mainly utilised by the Shrewsbury school-boys, whose racing craft give a further touch of life and colour during the summer term to a scene always good to look

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upon at that season of the year. Sabrina, issuing from her long seclusion, must be surprised indeed at the new rôle she is called upon to play and at the ornate and cheerful surroundings amid which she finds herself condemned to loiter so pleasantly. No mention of all this, or indeed of Shrewsbury, is complete without an illusion to Thomas Churchyard, for he was born in the town (1520) and describes the Quarry as he knew it with considerable enthusiasm in his *Worthiness of Wales* :—

> Behind the Walles
> There is a ground, new made, theator wise,
> Both deep and hye, in goodly auncent guise :
> Where well may sit ten thousand men at ease,
> And yet the one the other not displease.

He goes on to describe the entertainments which the Salopians enjoyed here, cock-fighting, the baiting of bulls and bears, wrestling and play-acting. He is as complimentary to the natives of Shrewsbury, their good housekeeping and hospitality, as was Farquahar nearly two centuries later. Churchyard was not much of a poet but an extraordinarily voluminous writer throughout a very long life with the liberal experiences of a soldier of fortune to draw upon. So he gives us contemporary pictures of the sixteenth century which are worth much more than second or third-rate verses with nothing but their literary qualities to recommend them.

A suspension bridge has been flung across the valley just below the Quarry, connecting Shrewsbury with Kingsland, the new residential suburb, of which the school with its many buildings and extensive grounds is by far the most important element. This wide-stretching plateau occupies a beautiful situation. Upon one side it commands the river, the Quarry, and the town with its many spires clustering upon the ridge beyond. Upon the other it looks straight over the rich undulations of Western Shropshire to a horizon entrenched from north to south by the Welsh hills, the Breidden standing in the centre like the pillars of some huge gateway guarding the Principality.

From the Berwyn mountains of Denbighshire, at the

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northern verge of this immense sweep, to Caradoc, the Long Mynd and the more isolated Wrekin upon the south, the high outer ramparts of Wales trail their long succession of broken heights against the distant sky line. No other public school in England has such a prospect from its precincts and its playing-fields. Charterhouse, like Shrewsbury, moved to a high plateau at about the same time with an outlook in which, I believe, it takes some pride. But Godalming has not the flavour of Shrewsbury by a long way. Nor could a view over the villa-sprinkled Surrey hills for any one with a soul within him be held as comparable to this eloquent panorama. It was a fortunate opportunity for the school that enabled it to shift its venerable but cramped quarters in such wise as this without breaking with its local ties and its past.

It is interesting to trace the story of the half-dozen or so old grammar schools, of which Rugby and Harrow are leading examples, that for some fortuitous reason, or more generally through some dominant personality, broke their provincial bonds and blossomed sooner or later into great public schools. Shrewsbury owes its position mainly to two pre-eminent head-masters, Butler and Kennedy, who, succeeding one another, compassed between them a period of seventy years, and more particularly to their teaching powers, which produced a steady stream of distinguished scholars, whose success at the universities made for notoriety. Thring lifted Uppingham from a smallish grammar school to a good place in the academic world, without achieving, or even, I think, attempting any distinction in scholarship. He played on quite other strings. Arnold was of course many-sided. But Shrewsbury, like Rugby in old days, was, despite interludes of depression, a very important grammar school. When once it had more or less out-stripped its local rivals, such as Oswestry, Ludlow, and Bridgnorth, it had a very large district, including Wales and its own very considerable town, to draw upon. Like similar foundations, however, prior to their development into modern importance, Shrewsbury had amazing fluctuations. During the civil wars it had 170 scholars, and I have seen a list of

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them scrawled by their own headmaster in an old note-book, together with lamentations on his sufferings occasioned by Parliamentary ill-usage.

When in 1798 Dr. Butler, who was destined to give the school a more national reputation, arrived, he found only one boarder, his predecessor and the second master having been accustomed to wile away their superfluous hours in jumping competitions at a flitch of bacon suspended from the kitchen ceiling. Though never, when in the old buildings, a large school, the distinctions gained by its students at the Universities, particularly at Cambridge, with which Shrewsbury had some official links, were at times astonishing. The three first on the list of the Classical Tripos one year were Salopians. All these distinctions may be read upon the old Honour boards now hanging in the new schools. One youth's name is inscribed in gilt letters, dating back to the middle of the last century, inasmuch as he constituted a record for all time at Oxford by winning the Ireland while still a boy at the school, a fact unknown, I believe, to the examiners. The number of Porson prizes which at Cambridge fell to Salopians during this brilliant period makes curious reading. All this, however, belongs strictly to the past, and the conditions of the past. It was the result of a rigorous classicism to the exclusion of almost everything else, exercised for 70 years by two men, with not only a passion for scholarship but a singular gift for transmitting it. The wide-spread competition among great numbers of well-equipped schools, such as now exists, was never dreamed of in days that might be called those of the great "teaching" headmasters. Before the middle of the last century, boys were not sent to a particular school because the situation was salubrious, the drainage good, the playing fields extensive, or the athletic reputation high.

None of these conditions existed in the old Shrewsbury. Parents in those days, as all contemporary correspondence and biographies unmistakably demonstrate, sent their sons rather to Dr. Smith or Dr. Brown than to the school they presided over, the three or four great Royal Foundations forming,

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perhaps, exceptions. Certainly outsiders sent their hopefuls to Dr. Butler or to Dr. Kennedy, not to Shrewsbury school *qua* school. If they did not show promise of classical scholarship, their bi-annual coach fares across England, from all one has heard of those old days, which in my case is a good deal, might perhaps have been spared without disadvantage. If promising, on the other hand, all was well and more than well. When the old school was full, as regards the accommodation of boarders that is to say, for Shrewsbury burgesses till recently had a right to a free education, it was, I believe, much more than full, if the paradox be permissible. But as a matter of fact Dr. Kennedy, as he himself has put in writing, had an average, taking his whole long period, of only 150 boys, which makes his achievements in turning out scholars so much the more remarkable.

The physical disadvantages of the old site and buildings naturally handicapped a school, with the advent of more exacting demands and the increasing competition of the fifties and sixties. The move up to the Kingsland plateau saved it no doubt from a still further decline and gave it altogether new life under different conditions. There are now some 400 boys in the school, practically all boarders. It has everything that the old place had not. But the scholarship reputation of old Shrewsbury was a thing to itself, only possible, as I have said, in that now remote period. Among the notabilities educated there, the name of Sir Philip Sidney is the most cherished among Salopians. This no doubt for his noble and altruistic qualities; for one may fairly assume that *The Arcadia* is not a standard work on Kingsland, nor again that it represents the highest intellectual effort of Salopian Illuminati. Shrewsbury has not, I think, produced many men distinguished in literature, though, if one turns to the classics, one would no doubt be deep in a list of scholars from which the reader would recoil in terror. Philip Sidney's father, Sir Henry, was installed for some time at Ludlow Castle as President of the Council of the Marches of Wales; hence the younger Sidney's connection with the school. Shrewsbury scholarship had the

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reputation of being of the highest and driest description. Dr. Kennedy was the very apotheosis of classical purists and regarded Latin and Greek as the alpha and omega of a liberal education. He maintained his conviction with something approaching ferocity. A false quantity was the unforgivable sin. His reverence for the Greeks and the Romans gave this distinguished person a certain truculency of demeanour when interpreting their treasures to his pupils, and an impatience with those that missed the point, characteristic perhaps of many great teachers.

Kennedy's zeal gave rise to many stories that are still current in old Salopian circles. One of these has it that, wrought up betimes to a pitch of anger and despair at some deficiency in perception of his Sixth form, he used to proclaim in impassioned tones that they were "all expelled". Whereupon, well knowing the form of procedure, they would all troop out of the room to turn up later in the day with meek inquiries as to trains, journey money, etc., rather to the embarrassment of their chief, who, of course, withdrew the ruthless sentence which had possibly even passed from his mind. One characteristic incident, however, I know has never been included among the Kennedy stories as it was experienced by a relative of my own, a distinguished physician in the West of England, who died some years ago at a tolerably advanced age. He was one of Kennedy's Sixth form and went up from Shrewsbury to Balliol, where in due course he took his degree, getting a first class in science the very first year that school was instituted at Oxford. This was a most heinous departure from orthodoxy in Kennedy's eyes. But my relative, not fully grasping the situation, had the further hardihood to write to his old headmaster for the customary half-holiday granted to the boys for University distinctions. Kennedy replied with kindly sarcasm congratulating his old pupil on having achieved the success to which he had perversely chosen to devote his considerable abilities, but was amazed at his request. He, the writer, need hardly say how proud and pleased he was at every distinction in classics

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gained by an old pupil. Mathematical honours, he declared, always gave him satisfaction. He was always glad to hear, too, even of achievements on the river or cricket field. "But really, my dear F—— to ask for a school half-holiday for a first in *Natural Science!* well! well!" These were the very words, to the best of my informant's memory, used in reply to so audacious a request; and I make a present of them to old Salopians who, I fancy, will accept the same with appreciation.

Charles Darwin is acknowledged to be the greatest of all Salopian celebrities in modern times, though it need hardly be said he owed nothing of his scientific training to Shrewsbury school. Dr. Butler used to storm at him for not sticking to his classics and called him, so Darwin says in one of his letters, a "poco-curante". The boy naturally, ignorant of Italian, thought the Doctor was swearing at him in a foreign tongue. The phrase indicates, I believe, one who only cares for trifles or poor insignificant things, and would doubtless represent with accuracy Butler's opinion of science as an educational item.

One more story of Shrewsbury school, and that a recent one, may I trust entertain the reader as much as it did me at the time of its occurrence. Now there is a venerable wall of red sandstone, which was moved up to Kingsland from the old school precincts because it was inscribed with the names of boys, who for many generations had been accustomed to carve them thereon. Some subtle custom that public school men will readily appreciate had grown up in later years, which confined the honour of such immortality to the two or three leading heroes of the year or the term on leaving school. The precise qualifications for this place in the sun are complex and do not matter here. As they are no concern of the school authorities, it will be rightly gathered that they are based rather on athletic distinction than the triumphs of the class-room. Possibly the names are not always those which in after life will reflect the greatest glory on their old school. But that is neither here nor there. For their little day, at least, they are

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the gods. It will be understood, therefore, that the Wall is a very serious affair.

Now it came to pass a few years ago that an enthusiastic young American, aged about two-and-twenty, a romantically minded student of the University of Chicago, landed in Liverpool, with meritorious intentions of steeping himself in the atmosphere of old England. Shrewsbury was his first stopping-place and, as he was a youth of an academic bent and with his head no doubt full of *Tom Brown*, its atmosphere entirely fascinated him. Unfortunately, it was the summer holidays, but, after wandering about the empty school precincts, he made up his mind that, despite his comparatively mature years, he would like above all things to be a Shrewsbury boy. Nay, more than that, for this romantic and artless young man determined to adopt this apparently enviable rôle. So, betaking himself to the headmaster's house and, not unnaturally, finding that functionary away on his holiday, he was referred to the next in authority, who happened to be on the spot and happens also to be an old friend of mine. The interview was simply delightful, and I had it at first hand a short time afterwards. This is a very much abbreviated summary of it.

"I want to enter myself, sir, at Shrewsbury School," said the American.

"But," said my astonished friend, "your age!"

"Oh, that's all right, sir," said the other. "I pledge you my word I won't give you one bit of trouble, so do make an exception in my favour."

"Yes, but boys come here at fourteen; we don't take men! You would be three or four years older than the oldest boy in the school. Such a thing, I am afraid, is utterly out of the question."

The American was dreadfully disappointed and, after further importunities, departed in doleful mood.

Two or three days afterwards there was discovered conspicuously carved upon the sacred wall:—

William E. Johnson,
University of Chicago.

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The humour of the thing was doubtless more apparent to the elders on the spot than it was likely to prove to the boys, so the inscription was left *in situ* till the school reassembled. When the boys returned, their indignation knew no bounds, as may be imagined. The humour of it, and withal the touch of pathos in the action, was quite outside their youthful ken. They took it as a studied insult, an impertinent practical joke from an infernal American! Of course, it was nothing of the kind. The poor fellow meant it as a compliment and a tribute of sincere admiration from an American collegian. Beyond a doubt he had regarded the names upon the wall as a mere illustration of the Anglo-Saxon mania for cutting them on everything that would yield to a knife, from a beech-tree to a crusader's effigy. So the inscription was solemnly erased, and the stone which bore it is still conspicuous in the wall for the radical treatment of its desecrated surface, which gives it the appearance of a recent insertion.

Shrewsbury is rich in churches and has been richer, for much superfluous destruction appears to have been dealt out in quite modern times, while as to the quality of the substitutes there is no room for doubt. The two great treasures of Shrewsbury, however, which have passed scatheless through a vandal age, that nevertheless built for itself such charming houses, are St. Mary's and the Abbey. The former stands in the high heart of the borough, and its lofty spire, among the highest in England, strikes a dominating and graceful note in every prospect of the town from far and near. The abbey stands in a low position across the river and wholly outside the town proper though within the orbit of its suburbs. Believed to occupy the site of an original British church in the unrecorded period of British Pengwern, for all practical purposes St. Mary's was founded as a Collegiate establishment by King Edgar. The present noble and spacious cruciform building is a blend of every style, from Norman onwards. The nave arcade is peculiar, though, of course, by no means unique, in the fact that Norman arches rest on early English clustered columns, the same feature characterising the arches

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leading into the transepts and chapels. The roof of both nave and chancel is of oak, carved with flowers and figures, a most beautiful example of its kind. The Trinity Chapel, south of the chancel, was added in the late fifteenth century for the Drapers' Guild, whose black-and-white hall still stands intact hard by the church. The north chapel of the chancel is curiously enough of the Cromwellian period and much above the architectural standard of its usual achievements. The huge perpendicular east window is fourteenth-century and at its base, together with some kneeling figures, is the inscription in Norman French: *Pray for Sir John de Charlton who caused this glass to be made and for the lady Hawise his consort.* The window is of Old English glass, and furthermore is a "Jesse," exhibiting the usual genealogical illustrations. It is supposed to have belonged originally to the church of the Fransiscan friars and at the Dissolution to have been transferred to old St. Chad's, in Shrewsbury, and at the collapse of that building to have been again moved to its present site.

But the pride of St. Mary's in the matter of detail is some most beautiful old foreign glass in a triple lancet window on the north side of the chancel. It represents the life of St. Bernard and came from the Abbey church of Altenberg. Having been removed thence for safety in the Napoleonic wars it eventually found its way to London, where it was purchased some seventy years ago by the Rev. W. G. Rowland, then vicar of St. Mary's, and brought there. It is thought to be the work of Albert Durer. A window in the south aisle also contains foreign fifteenth-century glass acquired by the same hand. In the Trinity Chapel there is the mutilated effigy of a cross-legged knight on an altar tomb of the fourteenth century, supposed to be a Leybourne of Berwick. In the same chapel is a marble monument to Dr. Butler, already spoken of as headmaster of the school and afterwards bishop of Lichfield. Another monument commemorates Admiral Benbow, who was a native of Shrewsbury and died in Jamacia in 1702 of wounds received in action with the French. A peculiarity of St. Mary's is that in consequence of having been in pre-Reformation

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times a Royal Free Chapel and outside the jurisdiction of either Pope or bishop, its vicar still retains a certain measure of independence of his spiritual chief of Lichfield, to which diocese, pending the time when it has a bishop of its own, Shrewsbury and most of Shropshire appertain. For beauty, grace and imposing proportions St. Mary's has few superiors in provincial England.

The Abbey does not lend itself to comparison with this great church of the town proper. For though a noble building only the nave and tower remain of the original fabric; transepts and chancel having long vanished, to say nothing of the monastic buildings which must have covered a large space. Instituted as a Benedictine House it grew to be one of the richest foundations in England, its mitred abbot having a seat in Parliament. A modest wooden church stood here in Saxon times. Granted at the Conquest to Odelerius, a secular priest and father of the better known Salopian chronicler Ordericus Vitalis, he erected a stone church in its place. Being chaplain to Roger de Montgomery, he persuaded his powerful patron to found an abbey, offering this his modest property as a nucleus for the same. So Earl Roger in 1083 went to the new church and laid his gauntlets upon the Altar, in token that he granted for the above pious purpose all the land lying around the east gate of the town. Thus with many subsequent acquisitions from magnates generous in their cups, or uneasy about their souls, or from pious ladies free of such imputations, Shrewsbury Abbey grew to greatness. Some of these benefactions, says Mr. Auden, who speaks feelingly, since his own parish of Condover was thereby a sufferer, were made at the expense of the parochial clergy and not at that of the landowners themselves. Earl Roger himself, like so many of his hard-hitting kind, spent the closing weeks or months of his life in the seclusion of this his own foundation.

In the long-vanished chapter house, there assembled in 1283 that momentous Parliament, which under Edward I finally settled the affairs of conquered Wales, just as Parliament fifty years earlier had met in St. Mary's to grapple with

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the difficulties which the still unbeaten Welsh were then occasioning. Though fashioned of red sandstone, but in despite of it rather sombre and gloomy, this great nave is wonderfully imposing. The two western bays of the lofty arcade which divides it from the side aisles, are pointed, the rest Norman arches springing from unusually massive pillars. The spacious west window in the tower is exposed to the nave through a lofty pointed arch over fifty feet in height. Upon it are displayed the armorial bearings of the great mediæval magnates of the Marches and many Shropshire families of renown. That the destruction of the rest of the building after the Reformation was not extended to the existing nave and tower is owing to the fortunate fact that these became the parish church of the district.

Not only has the restorer been busy on the old fabric, though in this case with a tender and judicious hand, but a new chancel and transepts have been recently erected at the cost of an anonymous donor and the work has been well done. Most of the fairly numerous monuments have been brought from elsewhere. One with a brass over it is assigned, though without certainty, to Roger de Montgomery himself. Among many older and uninscribed stones is a large one to Richard Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons in Queen Elizabeth's reign. A later inscription proclaims that the monument was restored in 1742 by Arthur Onslow, himself then holding the same honourable position, and that a third member of the same Salopian family had been Speaker in Queen Anne's reign; a rather remarkable record! Another altar tomb under the north wall commemorates William Jones, alderman of Shrewsbury, the grandfather of a very famous Shrewsbury lawyer of that name who became ultimately Chief Justice and incidentally entertained Prince Rupert during the civil wars. Practically the only surviving relic of the monastic buildings is a sexagonal stone pulpit standing upon a block of masonry with a flight of steps up it. The fact that it rises forlorn in a commercial yard on the other side of the high road suggests an unaccountable mischance. But I believe

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that this is actually its original position, Telford having swept its companion relics away when he made this, his famous London and Holyhead road. And Telford, by the way, learnt his art in Shropshire, for he was its county surveyor for quite a long time.

On this further side of the river, crowning the hill behind the Abbey, is the lofty column, some 120 feet high, which carries the full-length statue of Shropshire's greatest warrior, Lord Hill, of Peninsular fame. Prominent among Shropshire families the Hills had already produced more than one man of public note but this one, the second son of Sir Rowland of Hawkestone and the first peer, may fairly be ranked as the foremost of those able lieutenants who contributed to the fame of Wellington. Invaluable in the Peninsular War, he was second in command at Waterloo and a few years after the Peace, succeeded the Duke as Commander-in-Chief, which office he retained till his death in 1842. He was not only a great soldier but as a man was much beloved for his genial qualities and kind heart. At the foot of Abbey foregate below the Hill column is the old town house of the family, now the Park inn.

The present English bridge which carries this Holyhead road across the river into Shrewsbury, built about 150 years ago, is quite a handsome one with a stone balustrade. The respect of its builders for the impetuous floods that swell the Severn, inspired by the destruction of former bridges, is sufficiently shown by the unusual height that the arches are raised above the river, which here runs swiftly over a gravelly bed. The wide street, which leads hence up to the heart of the town, bears the curious title of the Wyle-Cop. It is particularly rich in old-timbered houses, some of them beyond a doubt of the fifteenth century. Looking down the sloping street from the Lion hotel of bygone glory, the sharp turn into whose yard gate was the supreme test of coachmanship, one gets a good, collective view of these old houses. The most noteworthy, for this very fact perhaps, is one in which, as an inscription informs the passer-by, Henry VII slept in 1485 on

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his way to Bosworth Field, and it is supposed at that time to have belonged to the Berringtons. There is a well-known story which tells how, on this notable occasion, the stout, old Governor, Master Mytton, refused to admit Henry Tudor at the Welsh gate, vowing that he should only enter it over his belly. Means, however, were found to bring about a change of mind in this conscientious functionary within the next twenty-four hours. But to save his oath he was allowed to lie down in the road on his back, so that Henry could step over him, after which no doubt he felt that he had sufficiently done his duty.

As for the other churches of Shrewsbury, St. Alkmund's, once, we are told, a beautiful building, rivalling St. Mary's, and with a long and interesting past, is now represented by a deplorable erection, retaining, however, the steeple of the former church. The source of this rather curious dedication is reputed to be a Northumbrian Prince, saintly or otherwise. The present hideous building is the more regrettable, since it seems to have been due to a panic which seized the Salopians on the fall, in 1788, of old St. Chad's tower, and worse still to an unwarrantable scare as regards St. Alkmund's itself. For the church proved in truth to be quite sound and offered a most determined resistance to the destroyers. Mr. Auden hints that private interests were concerned in its needless destruction and in the shoddy Gothic contrivance of a local stone-mason which arose in its place, and has defied all efforts at amelioration. Close by is St. Julian's, which also claims a British origin. Of this the tower containing both Norman and pointed work alone remains, the body of the present church being frankly Georgian.

But the greatest conception of this amazing period is illustrated in St. Chad's, just outside the limits of the ancient town and conspicuous upon the ridge looking westward towards Wales. It is supposed to occupy the site of the Palace or rather "Llys" of the old Princes of Powys in pre-Saxon times, and evidence discovered in the old foundations pointed to a remote origin. There is no occasion to touch here upon

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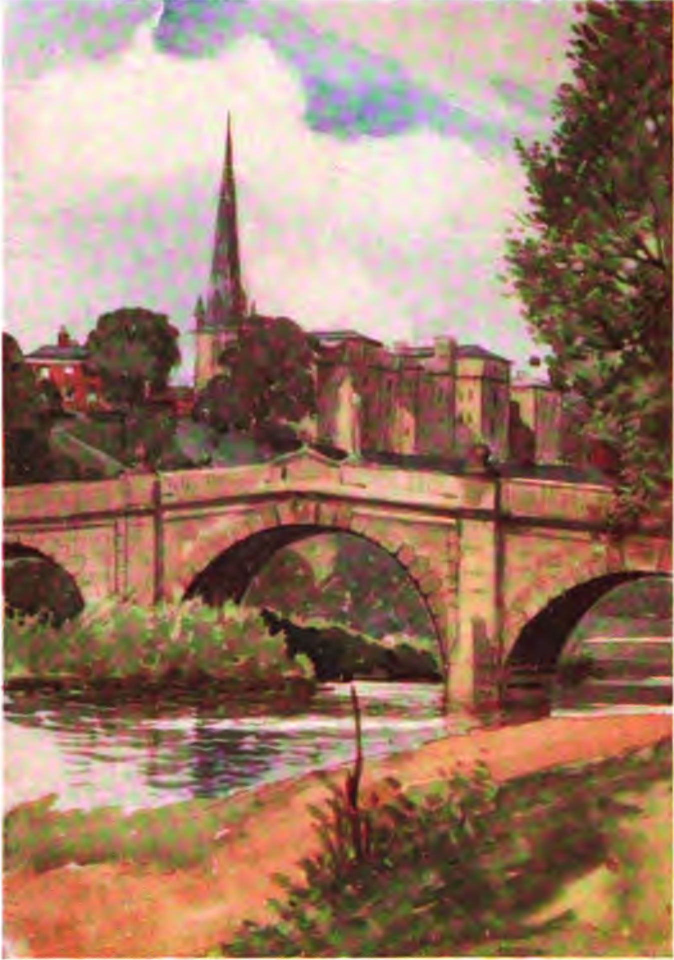

ENGLISH BRIDGE, SHREWSBURY

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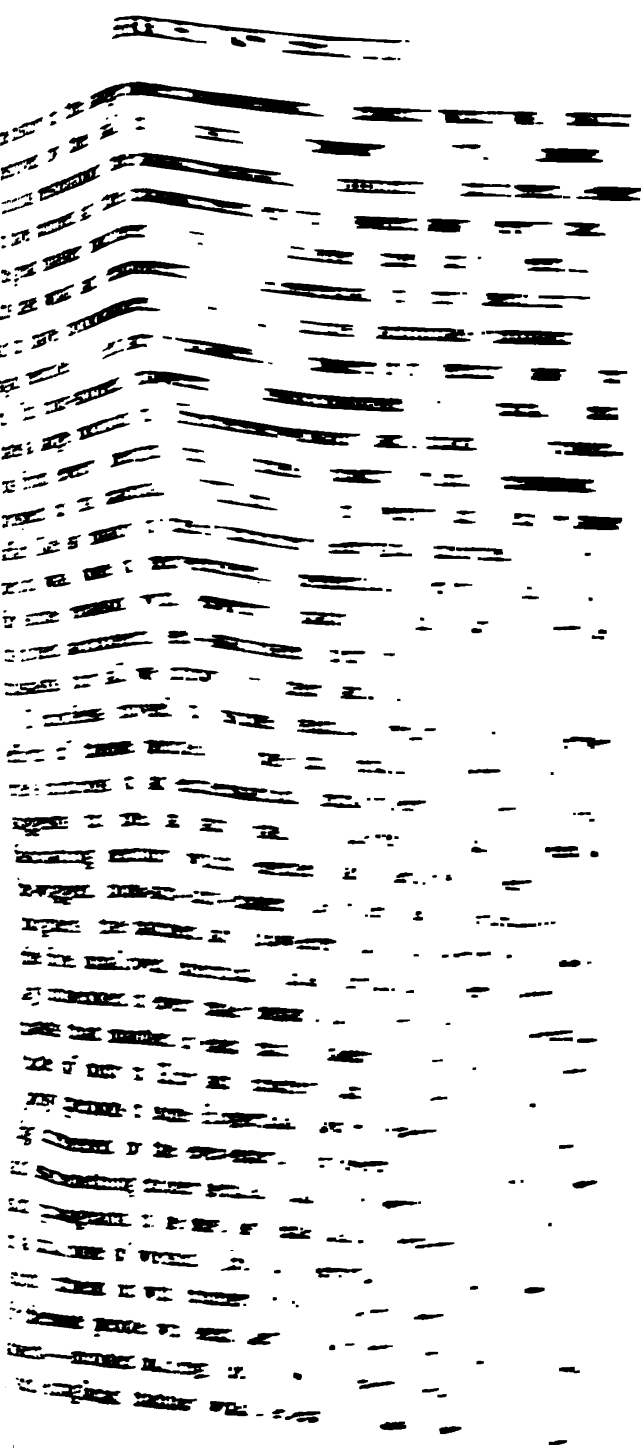

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the history of the large mediæval church which was partially destroyed by the fall of its tower in 1788. Instead of judicious restoration the natural instinct of that period seems to have jumped at the chance to sweep away every trace of the great master builders of olden time and to erect, as in this case, what an eminent Grecian, on first beholding it, is said to have pronounced, "a quite admirable imitation of a Pagan temple". At any rate, there is no getting away from it. Its four-storied tower, surmounted by a cupola dominates a large portion of Shrewsbury and stands up conspicuous from every height in the county which commands a prospect of its capital. This is no vestry and stone-mason affair, like so many of the minor Georgian churches. For the period was one of perverted, pretentious effort which broke for some reason with every canon of the past, cherished its noted architects, self-satisfied purblind souls, possibly enthusiasts, for all we know, in their astonishing code.

I confess myself to some stealthy regard for the greater efforts of these people, if one can frankly dispense with all one's notions of an ecclesiastical atmosphere. Their interior suggests to me, at any rate, a flavour of that otherwise fascinating century which erected and admired them. The be-wigged, blue-and-buff-coated, be-frilled and Hessian-booted burghers; the patched and powdered and hoop-skirted ladies; the fine, unalloyed, uncritical "Rule Britannia" sentiment that lay imbedded in every male breast, and the fire of innumerable toasts that mantled on each manly cheek; the conscious rectitude of duty to King and country that nodded through the prosy periods of some Hogarthian parson every Sunday morning, cheered by the ever-nearing prospects of the roast beef and something choicer perhaps than the beer of Old England: such pageants, to be sure, are scandalous perversions of fancy in a house of worship. But the Georgian churches seem to shout them up with trumpet voice. They were built by and for these people, who seem part of the very furniture of these absent-minded buildings, out of which every detail of Catholic and Anglican tradition would appear to have been excluded.

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It caught the American colonies, too, just as they were beginning to build substantial churches, and till almost the other day every Anglican church from Maine to South Carolina was fashioned crudely or pretentiously upon these lines.

But St. Chad's is by no means the ordinary oblong with long, round-headed windows and a bell turret that satisfied the average Georgian architect and churchwarden. It is a wonderful fabric, though what the aim, intention, or standard of the distinguished Mr. Stuart who designed it was, or what he was aiming at, I am not qualified even to guess. The Cambridge professor, already alluded to, hailed it with, I believe, some approval as a Pagan temple. So it may be judged perhaps upon these lines. Of strange, circular form, it is lit all round by high-arched windows, intersected with Ionic pilasters. Even the altar, as if further to flout convention, is at the west end, set in a small chancel behind a lofty, narrow wooden arch on polished wooden pillars, between which, if it is not impious to say so, one almost looks for the curtain to ring down between the acts. As a place of assembly my impression of it from one or two Sunday attendances there, are of an eminently cheerful, comfortably-seated, sociable place, so arranged that you can see all your friends at a glance, and the ladies can criticise one another's head-gear to great advantage. In short, a quite admirable assembly hall or theatre. It is surmounted by no mere bell turret, but by a lofty tower of four stages containing twelve bells. Such is St. Chad's, not of course to be mentioned among the ecclesiastical treasures of Shrewsbury, but as a great curiosity and a conspicuous reminder of eighteenth-century taste, and the contemporary civic life of a more than ordinarily representative provincial capital.

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CHAPTER VII

SHREWSBURY TO BUILDWAS

THE most conspicuous event beyond a doubt in the history of Shrewsbury is the great and bloody battle fought outside its walls in the year of our Lord 1403, when Henry IV, not long settled on his always uneasy throne, encountered the forces of his rebellious subjects from the north and west under the Percies of Northumberland. It was fought three miles to the north of the town on what was then a level, unenclosed common, interspersed with patches of tillage and known as Haytely field, but ever since as Battlefield. A church, to be known henceforward by the same name, was raised three years afterwards upon the very spot where the strife was fiercest, by Roger Ive, a local cleric, with the aid or at any rate patronage of the King, for the perpetual celebration of masses for the souls of the slain. Here it still stands amid the fields, in suggestive detachment from any sign of parochial associations, though, as a matter of fact, this long time the regular place of worship of an insignificant community and the only instance within my knowledge of a parish church with such an origin. Otherwise it is the goal to which visitors to the battlefield first turn their steps by way of Castle foregate and the Whitchurch road.

The dispute so decisively terminated here on Haytely field originated in certain grievances, real or imaginary, of the Percies, who had themselves been foremost in helping Henry of Bolingbroke to the throne, aggravated no doubt by the intriguing spirit of the old Earl, and the restless activity of his son Hotspur who was now nearly forty years of age. He had been Governor of North Wales on the outbreak of

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Glyndwr's Rebellion three years previously, but had soon afterwards gone northward to the more congenial task of fighting his hereditary foe the Scots, who were giving trouble on the Border. This business was closed triumphantly by Hotspur at his bloody victory on Homildon (Humbleton) hill near Wooler—to him, in his middle age, a glorious and long-waited-for revenge upon the Douglases for the blow they had dealt his youthful pride at that immortal and much-sung-of desperate fight beneath the moon at Otterburn. Upon Homildon, a lofty round-topped buttress of the Cheviot range, ten miles south of the Tweed, Hotspur had found the flower of Scottish chivalry ten thousand strong under the Earl of Douglas. It is of merely indirect concern here, but it was probably the strangest battle ever fought in that blood-stained country. Hotspur's joy in his long-delayed and crushing counter stroke must have been somewhat modified by the fashion in which it was achieved, seeing that he and all the chivalry who rode with him had to sit chafing with tight bridle rein till the field was won, and there was nothing left but to pursue and slay a routed and flying enemy.

For eighteen hundred trained archers without other aid won the victory of Homildon, against this brave and hardy Scottish host of ten thousand men posted on a steep, rock-ribbed and lofty hill, far steeper than Flodden Edge which is within easy sight. The mediæval Scots, to be sure, were traditionally at their worst either in using or in facing the bow. It did not suit their particular war-like genius. An armoured knight in those days did not expect to be shot down before he had even struck a blow at a buff-jerkined churl, much less couched a lance against some steel-clad peer, good for a heavy ransom. It probably seemed an altogether unfair advantage, though there is no evidence to show that the mailed knight regarded the hewing down of unarmoured churls from that point of view. But highly disciplined bow-fire must have been terrific, very different no doubt from that of the ordinary archers who accompanied armies. The armour of some of the Scottish Knights at Homildon had been three years in the making and

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tempering, but it was of no avail against the force with which this hail of arrows was driven in a continuous flight.

These eighteen hundred archers moved out to the front at Homildon and up the hill foot in extended ranks, and with such skilful tactics that the storm of arrows was continuous. Even Scottish valour could not face it. The few who dared that downhill charge were wiped out as are modern troops in a frontal attack. Goaded beyond endurance, the Scottish army at length moved down the flank of the hill on to the plain. But the archers followed and pursued the same remorseless tactics and with the same result, till their enemy, utterly disorganised, began to give way. Then Hotspur with his knights, men-at-arms and bill-men, hitherto hardly-restrained spectators, rushed upon the broken Scots and the battle became a mere bloody rout as far as the banks of Tweed. This is said to be the greatest achievement of the bow in British history. These archers were not Northumbrian levies, as a Border ballad fondly sings, but men mainly from the banks of the Severn, the Dee, the Wye, and the Usk, Welsh and Welsh Borderers, paid professional soldiers, in short, taken north by Hotspur. For this region had been the birth-place of the English long bow, which spread over the country during the fourteenth century and did such service in the French wars.

Eighty nobles and knights, including Lord Douglas himself, were the spoil of battle in this case of Hotspur's bow, rather than his spear. Their ransom value was very great and proved indeed the origin of the whole quarrel with the King, which led to the subsequent and still greater fight at Shrewsbury. For Henry, on hearing of the rich haul at Homildon, sent repeated messages to the Percies to forward their prisoners to London. Hotspur, who intended the ransom money for himself and his friends, justly regarding it as no concern of the King's, steadily ignored the demand. Still there was as yet no open breach, and the war went forward on the Scottish Border though in suspiciously lukewarm fashion. The King, in fact, was actually on the road with a considerable army to join the Percies in prosecuting it, when at Burton-on-Trent he

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was met by the astounding news that his old friends had thrown him over, and were marching on the Welsh Border to join Glyndwr, who for three years had defied Henry and held most of Wales under his banner.

> Three times hath Henry Bolingbroke made head
> Against my power; thrice from the banks of Wye
> And sandy-bottom'd Severn have I sent him
> Bootless home and weather-beaten back.

Shakespeare has thrown the further glamour of his magic pen over these stirring weeks. The *Tripartite Indenture*, by which Earl Percy, Glyndwr and Edmund Mortimer, whom the Welsh chief had captured in battle and made his son-in-law, were to divide England and Wales between them, has been transformed by the Bard from an obscure though historical fact into a dramatic scene. The times were indeed dramatic enough; the very skies had been full of portents. The ancient prophecies, clad in their strange weird jargon, had renewed their old significance under a revival of bardic enthusiasm. Owen, uniting in his veins the Princely blood of Powys and North Wales, was not merely a redoubtable warrior, but throughout England he was regarded as a magician, who could summon the tempest at his will and "call spirits from the vasty deep." Young Prince Henry, the future hero of Agincourt, was not swashbuckling in London but with his father's captains in Wales, learning the art of war against the wiliest of foes. The recent mysterious death of Richard II had deeply stirred the west and was but half believed in, while the Percies' sudden *volte face* was a mystery to the king, who was a flagrant usurper in the eyes of a large minority of his subjects.

And with all these troubles surging round him, Henry had been giving both his thoughts and his hopes to a long-cherished crusade to Palestine; but such indulgences were not for Bolingbroke. Hastening instantly westward from Burton and despatching fleet messengers to Prince Henry, already on the Welsh Border with his own force, to meet him at Shrewsbury, the King, who was always a rapid mover, marched to

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the Border capital. The Sheriffs of the neighbouring counties had been promptly warned, and in the incredibly short space of five days, on July 29th, Henry crossed the English bridge at Shrewsbury with an army of about 25,000 men. He was only just in time. For Hotspur appeared from the North at the Castle foregate on the evening of the same day, but finding himself forestalled and the Royal banner floating over the keep retired with his army, numbering some 15,000 men, to the neighbourhood of Berwick, where, in the house of the Bettons, as already stated, he took up his quarters for the night.

The Earl of Northumberland himself had been detained in the north by sickness, but Hotspur had been lately joined by his uncle, Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, who had slipped away from the side of the King with whom up to now he had filled the position of chief councillor. Unfortunately for Hotspur there was no Glyndwr at Shrewsbury or anywhere near it; communications had apparently miscarried. The fable, which has it that the Welsh were kept from the field by a swollen Severn and that their leader watched the battle from the branches of the Shelton oak, was a hardy and enduring one, but has been long effectually disposed of Glyndwr was at that moment operating in Carmarthenshire, wholly unaware of the crisis pending upon the Shropshire March. Hotspur's force consisted of his own people from Northumberland and Yorkshire, in which latter county the original estates of the Percies lay. His invaluable Homildon archers had probably been paid off, as his alienation from the King's interest dated from the dispute arising out of that battle, after which his movements against the Scots were suspiciously languid. Moreover, he had a further grievance of unpaid debts against Henry for war expenses. Some of the more important Homildon prisoners too, headed by Lord Douglas himself, were now with him, glad enough to commute their ransoms for service in the field. Numbers of archers, knights, and others, from Cheshire and Flint had also joined him on the march to Shrewsbury, wearing Richard's badge of

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the white hart. There was, of course, no sign of Glyndwr and apparently no alternative but to fight, though against an enemy nearly twice as numerous. Hotspur may possibly have meditated a retreat. But the King did not give him a chance as he was no doubt informed of the Glyndwr rumour and regarded time as precious.

So, marching out of Shrewsbury along the north road by Castle-foregate on the morning of the 21st, with his main body, another division under Prince Henry diverging on the left towards Berwick, Hotspur was found to have left his quarters and drawn up his army on Haytely field about where the church now stands. Either the King's old friendship with the Percies, or some other motive, seems to have occasioned, even at this eleventh hour, some reluctance to force matters. For when the two armies were already in position facing each other, Henry despatched the Abbot of Shrewsbury with an offer of terms so liberal that it seems Hotspur himself was touched, and inclined to meet them. The truculent attitude of his uncle of Worcester, however, put any further parley out of the question and so both sides braced themselves for a fight to the finish. All these preparations, movements, and delays, which we may guess at but no more, had consumed no little time, for it was certainly well into the afternoon before the battle began. Hotspur, strange to say, was depressed. His superstitious side had been touched. For on calling for his favourite sword it could not be found, and it turned out that he had left it at Berwick, of which place till that moment he had not heard the name. Turning pale, he exclaimed: "I perceive that my plough is drawing to its last furrow, for a wizard told me in Northumberland that I should perish at Berwick, which I vainly interpreted of that town in the north". Even the bravest of the brave, on whom the gilded youth of all England had modelled themselves—and, according to a dubious tradition, to his very tricks of speech and manner—blanched for a moment before the soothsayer. Glyndwr himself, the very arch-magician in the world's eyes, consulted in secret what he recognised no doubt as the more

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genuine article. This mislaid sword was possibly the one with which Hotspur had traced the outline of his hand on that oak panel in the old house at Berwick above the Severn, which the Bettons cherished till comparatively recent times. A local soothsayer had foretold that when they lost the panel they would lose the estate, and the prophecy, after several centuries, was duly fulfilled.

Hotspur's line of battle was probably on the gently rising ground just north of the church, that of the King having its centre on and about the site of the church itself. No battle on English soil between Hastings and Flodden made more impression upon contemporary writers, who speak of it as the bloodiest ever fought in England. Few at any rate have proved more fascinating to moderns who feel the stir of these old dramas in their veins. Shakespeare, who lived as near it as do we ourselves to the Jacobite rising of the '45, felt, as we all know, its strong appeal; and Falstaff's performances on that sanguinary field are, on the stage at any rate, perhaps the most mirth-moving of all his exploits.

The King is said to have thrown his mace up into the air as the signal for action, and the first feature of the fight was the terrific shooting of Percy's Cheshire archers, who were among the best in England. It must have been, I think, the first occasion on which Englishmen had to face the cream of their own bowmen during the zenith period of English archery, and Henry's Londoners and Midlanders did not like it. The arrows fell upon the King's troops, says Walsingham, "like leaves in autumn, every one struck a mortal man". The Royalist army was badly shaken, and, following the arrows, a furious charge of Hotspur's horse and spearsmen, coupled with the cry that the King had fallen, created for a moment a wild confusion, when the fate of England and the House of Lancaster trembled in the balance. The Royal standard was overthrown and the Earl of Stafford, Constable of England, struck dead beside it. But the King, though once unhorsed, was by no means dead, and by his valour and coolness did much to save his army from the catastrophe which for a time

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threatened it. The Prince, though wounded in the face by an arrow, refused to leave the field and covered himself with glory in this his first pitched battle. Hotspur and the Scotch Lord Archibald Douglas, of Homildon note, with thirty chosen horsemen cleft lances through their enemies as they in vain sought the King's person. Five knights were purposely it is said clad in similar armour and five times his eager foes thought they had felled him, for all were slain.

And so the desperate struggle laboured on through the waning July sunshine, hand to hand and foot to foot. "It was more to be noted vengeable," says Fabian, "for here the father was slain by the son, the son by the father." At length the gallant Hotspur fell, apparently alone at the moment and surrounded by his foes, an arrow or a spear having pierced his brain. As the news spread a great shout arose, caught up by the King himself, that the fierce Northumbrian whelp was dead. The King now urged his troops to still more strenuous efforts and in the end his superior numbers prevailed. After three hours' fighting and before the sun had quite touched the distant Welsh hills, the insurgent army broke into one of those wild panic-stricken flights that so often accompanied the defeat of a mediæval army. Some fled towards Wem in the north, others sought refuge in the wooded ridge of Haughmond to the east. The slaughter which lasted through the hour of sunset and into the falling shades of night was tremendous; "men lay down in mixed heaps," says Walsingham, "weary, beaten, and bleeding". Upon the King's side 4,600 are said to have been killed and wounded, while of Hotspur's smaller army 5,000 were accounted as actually slain, including 200 knights and gentlemen of Cheshire. The Earl of Worcester and other notables were taken prisoners and beheaded the next day at the High Cross in Shrewsbury. Worcester's body is thought to have been buried in the Abbey Church, but his head was sent away and affixed to London Bridge. Hotspur was at first decently interred by his kinsman, Lord Furnival, but his body was afterwards exhumed and set up between two millstones in Shrewsbury lest there should be any doubt about his death.

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It was then beheaded and quartered and the portions sent to various towns in England.

Shakespeare takes a prodigious liberty in portraying Hotspur and Prince Henry as contemporaries. Brave as the Prince was he would have stood a poor chance at his tender age against that redoubtable and seasoned Northumbrian warrior, who it will be remembered is represented as succumbing to his prowess. Hotspur and the King himself, as a matter of fact, were of the same generation and much of an age, though in the Play the latter, smarting under the frivolities of the Prince as painted by Shakespeare, regrets that he and Hotspur had not been changed in their cradles! Many persons of note were buried in the Shrewsbury graveyards, but the bulk of the slain were thrown into great pits beneath and around the site of Battlefield Church, and some years ago when a drain was being cut under its walls, masses of their bones were encountered and exposed. Just in front of the church there is now a confusion of ditches, mounds, and large shallow pits, overgrown with briars and bushes, which in wet weather become temporary ponds. It is thought probable that these mark the scene of the wholesale and hasty interment which followed the battle. It would be impossible to bury such thousands of bodies without leaving permanent traces of the work, and there are no other such on the battlefield.

The church itself is a fair sized Perpendicular building, the nave and chancel being continuous with a crenellated tower at the west end. It was repaired and restored in 1860. There is a good deal of interesting detail within it including a quaint wooden figure of the Virgin with the dead Christ on her lap. It was a collegiate foundation, endowed by the King with lands in Lancashire and elsewhere. Its mission, as already stated, was "to pray for the souls of all the faithful departed slain in the field of Battlefield and there buried". If the like of this stands anywhere in England I at any rate do not know of it.

During the Civil War Shrewsbury with Shropshire, like the rest of the Border counties, was strongly Royalist. Charles

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was in the town himself for a couple of days and a month after the outbreak of the war to strengthen his interests in that quarter. A mint was set up here at the bottom of Pride hill in an old fourteenth-century house still in part extant, which coined the silver plate of the Universities and the local gentry throughout the war. The school contributed £600 to the King's war chest. The town was held for the Royalists during most of the war under the governorship of Sir Francis Ottley of Pitchford, and for a time in 1644 was the headquarters of Prince Rupert. It was not attacked until the following year, when probably growing lukewarm from the constant exactions necessary to a failing cause, it was captured with trifling loss on either side, by the Parliamentary general, Mytton of Halstone, a Shropshire man of course. A characteristic incident of this brief affair relates to one Captain Benbow, a then zealous Parliamentarian, who led the principal storming party. Like some other Roundheads, disgusted with the Cromwellian regime, and still more with the King's execution, Benbow eventually supported, even to extremity, the other side and lost his life in the hopeless campaign of Worcester in 1651. For being there captured, he was shot by Cromwell's orders at Shrewsbury, on the very spot over which he had once led his storming party. He was buried at St. Chad's and his horizontal tomb-stone may still be seen inscribed with his name and date of his death. His nephew, Admiral Benbow, a more famous, but perhaps not a braver man, was born in the present St. Mary's vicarage. He distinguished himself greatly against the French, both in the Channel and the West Indies, in the time of William III, who prized him highly. There are many stories about this tough old tar, of whom Shrewsbury is duly proud. It will be enough here to state that he died in Jamaica in 1702 after the amputation of his leg, shattered by a canon ball in a sea fight with the French, and that a bust and monument in St. Mary's Church recall his services with all the eulogistic phraseology that the eighteenth-century obituary writer revelled in. But enough of Shrewsbury, its wars, its warriors, and its worthies, howsoever incomplete a record the

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critical Salopian, unmindful of material exigencies, may deem it. The captious reader, with an eye on the mileage of the Severn and the number of its towns, may think otherwise. But I fancy that should he meditate a leisurely exploration of the Severn valley, he would probably find himself lingering at least as long in the old Shropshire capital as the measure of space here given to it represents.

When the Severn has completed its grip of the town of Shrewsbury it hurries away northward, as may be readily gathered from the railway bridge by the station, and describes another and much wider loop before returning to the steady south-easterly course it thence pursues to Bridgenorth and more or less for the rest of its journey. In this aforesaid loop the river runs for some miles through quiet, cattle-haunted pasture lands to turn back beneath the noble beech woods and the heathery heights of the long, conspicuous ridge of Haughmond. Just beyond the far end of the loop is Sundorn Castle, a seat of the Corbets built of red sandstone, ample in dimensions, but not very interesting in external features. Near the edge of its well-wooded park, stand the ruins of Haughmond Abbey (*Haut-mont*), founded for Augustin canons in the twelfth century by William Fitzalan of Clun. After the Dissolution it passed through the hands of the Littletons, Hills, Barkers, and Kynastons to its present owners the Corbets. It is a wholly delectable spot, giving immediate access to the beautiful beech woods of Haughmond hill, where, by the way, Lord Archibald Douglas was captured while flying from the field of Shrewsbury.

The charm of its setting has doubtless helped to make for its popularity with visitors from all parts of the country. Contrary to the usual condition of such remains there is more left here of the monastic buildings than of the Abbey Church. Though the Chapter-house, entered by a rich Norman doorway, with smaller ornamented arches on each side and statues between the pillars, still preserves its fourteenth-century wooden ceiling of ribbed oak. The Refectory is fairly complete as are some other portions of the building. Part of the Abbot's

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house is standing, but more prominent is the great Guest hall, over 80 feet in length, with a large window denuded of its tracery. A fire-place also remains and in the corner is a newel stair-case.

The spires of Shrewsbury three miles away make a fitting background to the green levels through which the Severn is silently urging its outward and its backward course. Uffington lies a mile down stream from here and is only worth noting for the fact that it derives its name, doubtless for some good reason, from the redoubtable Offa, King of Mercia, who pushed back the Welsh and with his famous dyke set bounds to both Saxon and Cymry that practically held good for centuries. You can get across from here by winding lanes in three or four miles to the main road south from Shrewsbury, which has already cultivated some intimacy with the Severn, till it crosses it by the great stone bridge at Atcham. This, to my mind, is one of the most satisfying scenes of its kind on the Shropshire Severn and the most perfect, if one may borrow an artist's phrase, in its composition. The river, widening out between low banks along the roadside and running briskly over a gravelly bed, swishes through the arches of the lofty bridge to lave, with tempered current, a bow-shot below, the fine old church of Atcham, planted amid its encircling trees and well-kept precincts above the willowy bank. A bowery vicarage and red Georgian-looking house, that ought to have been a famous coaching inn if it wasn't, complete a picture essentially English and wholly charming.

Looking back towards Shrewsbury from the bridge, Longner Hall, a mile or two distant, can be vaguely seen. The seat of the Burton family for centuries, it is associated with one of those incidents that seize the fancy and become thereby the heritage of a neighbourhood. The more so in this case as there is an altar tomb in the garden to the subject of the tale, the Squire Burton of that day, setting forth after the metrical fashion of the period why he was thus buried in unconsecrated ground. Now the way of it was this. The worthy gentleman, a pious soul of the stoutest Protestant convictions,

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ATCHAM BRIDGE

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had the misfortune to grow old in the distressful reign of Queen Mary, whose repellent insignificant personality and dismal bigotry and puling fondness for the unspeakable Philip must have disgusted even those Englishmen whom she did not want to burn. Edward Burton it seems took it terribly to heart and one day after a report of the Queen's illness, hearing a clash of bells in Shrewsbury, he was filled with rapture at the thought that they might be ringing for the accession of Elizabeth. So he despatched his son to learn the truth, with instructions to throw up his hat when he came in sight of the house if this were indeed so. The young man returned in due course and gave the joyful signal that Mary was indeed dead and Elizabeth proclaimed. But when he reached the house he found his father, who had seen it, overtaken with a death seizure and only just able to gasp out, "Now let thy servant depart in peace, etc.". The very joy of it had killed him. But the Rector of St. Chad's, being a Marian, refused him burial in his own parish church. Hence the domestic interment which so effectually preserves the story.

Atcham (*Eatcham*), "the house of the followers of Eata," is, I believe, the only *ham* in Shropshire. The church is a foundation of St. Eata, abbot of Melrose and Lindisfarne in the seventh century, who as missioner to Shropshire here first planted Christianity in the district. Springing from a green carpet of well-tended turf, which seems indeed an extension of the vicarage grounds, this striking old riverside church shows up to the fullest advantage. It has a good Norman tower, but no external break between nave and chancel in the body of the building, nor yet side-aisles. There are two apparently Saxon windows in the chancel, while the north wall is thought to contain Saxon work. There is also a curious upright gravestone, removed here at the destruction of old St. Chad's in Shrewsbury, representing an Edward Burton and his wife, Jocosa (1524), with seven daughters underneath. But more interesting still is some stained glass in two of the windows brought here a century ago, for family reasons, from Bacton Church in the Golden valley of Herefordshire. This relates to

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Blanche Parry, whose long metrical epitaph, inscribed on her handsome monument there, struck me, on encountering it unexpectedly some years ago, as a most delightful and characteristic specimen of its kind. The said Blanche Parry was chief gentlewoman of the Privy Chamber to Queen Elizabeth, apparently for a great many years, and if her whimsical epitaph represents her sentiments, prided herself in remaining, like her great mistress, a "mayde in courte and never no man's wyffe". She predeceased the Queen and died blind. Her memorial, shifted here from Bacton, represents this loyal lady receiving a book from Queen Elizabeth. The Bacton glass in the other window is of earlier date and commemorates the grandfather of Blanche Parry.

In Atcham too, formerly by the way called Attingham, was born in the year 1075, Ordericus Vitalis, author of the *Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ*, and was baptized in its church by his godfather, Orderic the priest. For most readers, no doubt, this particular bit of information may seem like digging up dry bones with a vengeance, and will leave them absolutely cold. As a matter of fact, however, Ordericus holds no small place among those industrious monks to whom we owe most of what we know about the middle ages. There is nothing dry about his chronicle at any rate. His inaccuracies scandalise the serious historian, but he is more than forgiven by them for his comprehensive gossip about everything under the sun, where precision matters nothing, while intimate pictures of contemporary life at that distant day count for so very much. He resembles in some respects our old friend Giraldus Cambrensis, witnout his physical activity and personal ambition. Ordericus himself tells us how he left Atcham at five years old, went to school at Shrewsbury at the church of St. Peter, his father's charge, which he saw himself, while studying there, transformed into Earl Roger's great abbey. He was taken subsequently to France and spent apparently the whole of his long life and did all his writing as a monk in the Norman Monastery of Ouche.

Skirting the road side for some distance towards Wroxeter

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are the Park lands of Attingham Hall (the old form of spelling is here retained), the seat of Lord Berwick. The eighteenth-century house, confronting a wide expanse of treeless turf, is typical of its time. An immense, white, rectangular building, with low wings to match, flush with its front. A classic portico and symmetrical rows of windows; redeemed from ugliness by a certain dignity and even stateliness. Far more to my fancy than the architectural triumphs of an earlier or later date, do these massive, many-windowed, blocks of masonry suggest the almost pathetic sense of social security and faith in the permanent ascendency and unshrinkable value of landed property which witnessed their erection. One cannot imagine them in the hurly-burly of a siege like their predecessors of a century earlier. Nor again reconcile their serene dignity with a middle-class Ministry and a dominant proletariat. They seem to breathe of pocket boroughs or of voters few and purchasable, and of the period when trade in England had become "vulgar" as it was becoming abnormally prosperous.

A tasteful bridge carries the highway over the little river Tern which joins the Severn near by. Leaving the main road for Wellington and turning to the right with the course of the river, there soon comes into view a large, wide fragment of masonry standing out on the brow of a low ridge. The casual passer-by wouldn't look at it twice, taking it probably for a roofless barn or some such ignoble relic. But it is in fact the Basilica of the British Roman town of Uriconium, and has weathered the tempest of, say, seventeen hundred years. I do not think any other Roman building in England has survived in this fashion above ground, neglected and unhonoured like any old barn, among turnip or barley or wheat crops. It has now, of course, for many a year been not only treated with reverence, but has formed the centre of several acres of excavated ground exposing the foundation of the buildings which stood near it. Of the 170 acres of tillage and pasture lands, extending at one side to the parish church of Wroxeter, which are known to cover the remains of the

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Roman town, some four acres around the Basilica were excavated nearly fifty years ago. The section thus exposed was fenced in and has been looked after ever since, a trifling charge being made to the visitor. With this small but deeply interesting commencement, impatient antiquaries have been feign to content themselves. The funds available for national work of this kind have been, I believe, required for Silchester, which, being nearer London, had, I presume, the preference. British millionaires, though as a matter of fact the sum required is relatively trifling, do not care twopence about Roman towns, and the people that do are generally poor men. But why should not a peerage be contingent on a work like this, managed, of course, with the usual discretion observed in such matters?

The treasures of all Roman Britain would be thereby exposed in a comparatively short time, and the family or families instrumental in the good work would be justly regarded as benefactors to the State, not as mere contributors to Party funds! The purchase value of the soil which covers Uriconium, for instance, may be approximately estimated at from twenty to thirty thousand pounds; a lump sum of fifty to a hundred thousand, and, for aught I know, much less, would expose and preserve a city one-third larger than Pompeii to a delighted world! an educative process worth a hundred books. "Lord Wroxeter" would be a quite resounding title and no doubt an honoured one instead of the other thing. Money for these purposes is, in truth, deplorably hard to come by. The walls of Uriconium, still readily traceable, enclose about 170 acres. The four acres or so of preserved excavation work around the Basilica are due to the efforts of the Shropshire Antiquarian Society fifty years ago. Three years since, a further small sum was raised, and three or more acres in another spot have been opened, yielding rich results. Over this whole pear-shaped tract, half one side of which, reckoning from the stem end, rests on the Severn, foundations of buildings and pavements of houses have been accidentally turned up from time to time. There is

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every reason to believe that any section of this great area, nearly three miles in circumference, would give as good results as those small portions already uncovered.

It seems fairly certain that Uriconium was destroyed by the great Saxon raid up the Severn at the end of the sixth century, and destroyed, moreover, once and for all, wiped out, in short, by sword and torch in one savage attack and never reoccupied. Human skeletons, with coins of the period found in obvious hiding places, support the chronicles and poems in this belief. Evidence points to the founding of the city in the earlier periods of Roman occupation, that of Ostorius, the conqueror of Caradoc, in the first century. In such case it must have enjoyed an existence of five hundred, in the main, peaceful years. Its shattered buildings, like all those others that the Romans raised in Britain, formed for centuries a convenient quarry out of which the neighbouring churches, houses, barns, and walls were fashioned. The Western Watling Street, now represented at this point by a lane running from near the Basilica to the Wellington road, bisected the city. When it enters the latter at the north-eastern gate, it has already passed the cemetery outside the walls, ample remains of which in the shape of inscribed tombs have been discovered. Running south-west through the heart of the city, the road left it by a gate on the site of the present hamlet of Wroxeter, which opened to a ford, possibly to a bridge, across the Severn, and thence headed *via* Church Stretton for the British Roman city of Kentchester near Hereford. No traces of military occupation have been found at Uriconium. It seems to have been a purely commercial and residential centre, and no doubt an important *entrepôt* for the mineral products of Wales. It is quite certain that it was destroyed by fire and sword. Wherever the earth has been turned up over the foundation of the buildings, it shows a black stain from the scorching of fire, while even in the mere fraction of the town hitherto excavated the skeletons of men and women have been found in places and attitudes that are unmistakably those of a panic-stricken people.

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The surviving fragment of the Basilica already alluded to is about 20 feet high by 70 feet in length. The original building as measured by its foundation was no less than 229 feet long by 67 feet wide and divided by rows of columns into a nave and two aisles. In the latter, loose mosaic pavements were found, while the nave was floored with small bricks in herring-bone fashion such as may be seen in other parts of the ruins. Among the many relics now preserved in the Shrewsbury Museum, are mortuary tablets from the cemetery and tiles from the baths, while in the Basilica, specimens of the columns that supported the roof are retained *in situ.* This vast hall was used for law courts, markets, and as a general meeting place, while adjoining it the elaborate public baths, with their heated chambers, ante-rooms, and hypocausts have been laid bare, together with several shops and other buildings. I had been here several times in former years, but on this last occasion was fortunate in finding the new excavations at another spot nearer the village still in progress. The season before some two acres had been opened in the same area, but poverty of means had compelled the immediate replacement of the soil, after a plan had been taken, to meet the demands of agriculture, and a crop of roots was then maturing on the surface as if nothing had happened and there was nothing below them. The area I found just opened, to a depth of perhaps 8 feet, covered about 3 acres. This too was soon about to be filled in again and is doubtless now under crop! In a shed near by were collected the moveables recently found in the ruins. Among them were heaps of Samian ware and the British imitation of it, while among the small relics were rings, filulœ, bangles, cut-glass, scissors, keys, statuettes, bottles, nail cleaners, bronze bells, jet ornaments, human bones, and stags' horns.

The exposed area showed, as was expected, the further remains of a well-built town with foundation walls some two or three feet high. Streets, drains, wells, houses were all here, among which a massive building, pronounced to have been a temple, was conspicuous, as well as a villa with hypocausts and a

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good deal of tile flooring. The quiet of this gracious, undulating Shropshire landscape, with the Severn stealing below the old church and its tall, encircling trees and leafy hamlet close at hand; the lofty Wrekin lifting its bold, isolated summit in the near background, are all in favour of the mental effort one is called upon to make on a spot like this. The silent eloquence of these few uncovered acres, absolutely fresh as I last saw them from the excavators' spade after centuries of oblivion, moves one even more perhaps than those here, or elsewhere, which have been exposed to the sun and storms of half a century, and even slightly tampered with for the sake of enlightening the curious visitor. That those illuminating relics of an age in our history otherwise practically inarticulate, should be consigned again to oblivion and buried beneath roots, grain, or grass, because in rent, profit, and wages, the soil above them produces some fifteen pounds per annum, does surely seem the apotheosis of indifference. Not on the part of the owner, of course, but of a public, which, at the time when I saw the dirt about to be flung back on them, was pouring out money like water on a thousand trifling luxuries. That a cataclysm which puts both alternatives for the moment, or probably much longer, out of mind or consideration, has since overtaken this country and Europe, does not alter the situation as it stood a year ago by one jot, or mitigate the reproach of it by one tittle.

It was very probably from the top of the Wrekin that Llywarch Hen, after escaping, as he tells us, with his womenfolk from the fire and slaughter to a neighbouring height, witnessed the destruction of Tren (the river Tern), the white city, the home of Cynddylan, or rather of his father Cyndrwyn. The chieftain himself, as we have seen, had his fortress at Pengwern (Shrewsbury), a then comparatively insignificant place.

> Cynddylan bright pillar of his country
> Chain bearer, obstinate in the fight,
> Protected Tren his father's town.
> Cynddylan with heart of hawk
> Was the true, enraged
> Cub of Cyndrwyn, the stubborn one.

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The bard describes the eagles of war screaming for the heart's blood of Cynddylan.

> The Eagle of Pengwern screamed aloud to-night,
> For the blood of men he watched.
> Tren may indeed be called a ruined town.
>
> The Hall of Cynddylan, it pierces my heart
> To see it roofless, fireless.
> Dead is my chief, yet I am living.
>
> Slain were my comrades all at once
> Cynan, Cynddylan, Cywraith,
> Defending Tren the wasted city.
>
> The white town in the valley,
> Joyful its troops with the common spoil
> Of battle, its people are they not gone?

Cynddylan, of the Powys purple and chainbearer, thus lamented in several score of triplets, was doubtless of the Royal line of Powys, the chain in question being the Eurdoch of gold links, its badge. The aged Llywarch was from the western section of the Roman Wall country and had possibly seen the destruction of Birdoswald and the smaller Wall fortresses. The wreck of Uriconium by these West Saxons from the south is placed at about A.D. 570, but they were not long afterwards defeated and driven out. Pengwern became the capital of Powys, till long afterwards it in turn was enveloped and appropriated by the Mercian Saxons. And the reader may, perhaps, need reminding of the wide difference between the methods of the Anglo-Saxon conqueror of Border districts, after Christianity had been established, and the ruthless exploits of his heathen ancestors.

As for the village of Wroxeter, *Wrace-ceaster* in the original Saxon (*the town of vengeance*), there is not much more of it than the church and vicarage which commemorate in name the great dead city that lies beneath their well-trimmed turf and stately trees. In a rather different sense it is Haytely moor and Battlefield church over again with an altogether mellower setting. The gateway from the road into the church-

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yard is composed of Roman pillars from Uriconium, which, with a large summer-house in an adjoining garden, built of fragments from the same source, have a strange air in this peaceful backwater of English rural life, and would be apt to startle a wanderer by Severn side unacquainted with the significance of the soil he was treading on and its dread past.

The church is of Norman origin, and still contains a good deal of Norman work. An imposing tower displays decorated band-work beneath its parapet similar to that upon its neighbour of Atcham, with robed figures as gargoyles, and image niches on the face of the wall. On the reverse side of the tower are still existing images, single and in groups. In the chancel are two Norman doorways, one, however, filled in, and some lancet windows of the same period, though the chancel arch is much later. But the glory of the church is in its monuments which are among the best in the country. All but one are to the Newports of High Ercall. The exception lies on one of three sixteenth-century altar tombs, to wit, Sir Thomas Bromley, Lord Chief Justicc of England, under Mary, with his wife, a Lyster, by his side. Another represents Sir Richard Newport and his consort, the Judge's daughter. A third is that of John Barker of Haughmond, who is said to have died at forty of grief for the loss of his wife, Margaret Newport, who lies beside him. Another monument commemorates Sir Francis Newport, whose sister was the mother of Lord Herbert of Chirbury. A later and spacious marble monument, of the type popular in the days of William and Mary, is to the second Lord Newport and first Earl of Bradford. A brass to Andrew Newport of the Inner Temple, 1610, proclaims the fact that he "lived and died hating and detesting the Church of Rome as it now standeth".

A little-travelled by-road follows the Severn's course, some half-mile distant from the river, and raised above it, to Eyton-on-Severn, where Lord Herbert of Chirbury was both born and married, the property having come to his mother's people, the Newports, through Judge Bromley whom we have just gazed upon in marble effigy. There is no village here

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now, and whether the present white-gabled house, standing pleasantly up-raised upon open pasture land above the Severn, has any architectural link with the one so intimately associated with these Tudor notables I do not know. It has the air now of a high class farm-house, but there seems to be the remains of a fine avenue of approach along the ridge. The Bridgemans, however, succeeded to it before Lord Herbert's death, and having been subsequently burnt out of their chief residence in the civil wars took up their permanent abode here. Just across the Severn, a mile or so away, the park lands of Cound Hall approach the river, which between these and Cressage station actually touches the main Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth road. At the point of contact a large, old-fashioned inn sits red and hospitable above the water. That it is a haunt of anglers needs no saying, in this case trollers for pike and patient watchers of the hope-inspiring float. For the Severn has small attraction for the fly-fisher. Its salmon, as before stated, will not rise; its trout are very scarce and not given to surface feeding save in a bit of rapid here and there; while the grayling, though plentiful enough at spots lower down, keep to their special haunts.

Cound Hall itself, looks early Georgian, but the Pelham and Cressett families have been here for centuries, as may be read upon the monuments in the ancient red sand-stone church higher up the slope. Here again, is a fine, squat, massive tower with chancel, nave, and side aisles, the last divided by pointed arches. The Norman font and a sanctuary knocker on the door were shown me with much pride by the sexton who was obviously himself one of those props and pillars of the Church of England we shall miss when they have all died out. The Condover brook, called here the Cound brook, skirts the Hall on its way to the river, an event of rarer occurrence and greater import on the Severn than is the arrival of a tributary on the Wye or Dee. Like all those that flow from the west and, unlike all that meet the river from the east, this is quite a notable little trout stream. Rising near the foot of the Stretton hills and twisting merrily through alder thickets

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and open pastures, upon a stony bottom, it runs by Lebotwood to Condover, the famous old Tudor manor-house of the Cholmondleys. Thence to Cound it is almost an unknown stream to me. It seems, however, still to preserve in this its final stage some measure of its youthful sprightliness; and doubtless the trout still stick to it. It is the first stream worth mentioning, save the Meole brook or Rea at Shrewsbury, to break the right bank of the Severn since its junction with the Vyrnwy on the Welsh Border: the Tern, of Uriconium fame, being the only arrival so far on the other shore.

If space were unlimited, to use a formula suggestive of terrifying possibilities both to reader and author, and if the Severn valley as nearly as may be were not the subject of this work, I should drag the former off to certain notable spots but four or five miles to the westward of Cound. As it is, I can only recommend him, should the opportunity offer, to visit Acton Burnell and Pitchford. The first for its ruinous thirteenth-century castle in the park, interesting, not only for its still remaining architectural features, but for the fact that the first Edward held here, in 1283, a parliament convened for the settlement of matters of high importance concerning the future government of Wales: the nobles sitting in the castle and the Commons in a barn hard by. The church is also interesting, but the mansion-house of Sir Walter Smythe was unfortunately burnt to the ground only the other day. Pitchford is, I think, the largest, and certainly one of the most beautiful half-timbered mansions in England, and has some further interest in having been formerly the property of Lord Liverpool, the well-known statesman of the early nineteenth century, with whom, and in this house, Queen Victoria stayed in her girlhood. As the beautiful, little twelfth-century parish church is but a stone's-throw from the house across a woody dell, even a stranger can enjoy the exterior of this many-gabled and glorious old mansion, associated in early days with the Ottley family who built it. Their predecessors, the de Pytchfords, are represented by the wooden effigy of a mailed knight in the church. At Cressage, however, just below

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Cound, where there is nothing much noticeable but another most beautiful, though small, half-timbered house, perched up amid a pleasant garden and known as the Old Vicarage, I would recross the river to Eyton. Though bridges are quite unessential to a literary pilgrimage, I may note that Cressage is thus rarely favoured among Severn villages.

Just behind Eyton, from which we so recently made this stride across the river, and near the main road to Bridgnorth, which the by-way soon rejoins, is the village of Eaton Constantine, notable only as the early home of Richard Baxter. The half-timbered house, which was both his home and his father's property in the early seventeenth century, is still standing. Author of a hundred and fifty-seven works, of which the *Saint's Everlasting Rest* is the best known, he was throughout life associated with various parts of Shropshire and its neighbourhood. Educated at Ludlow Castle, he studied for the ministry at Wroxeter, but a short walk from his father's house. Baxter has written his own life and times in voluminous fashion, for abridged editions of the work run to four volumes, and he lived to be seventy-five. He describes Eaton Constantine in his youth, as having a parson eighty years of age who had also another living twenty miles off. Being blind he repeated the prayers from memory, but for reading the lessons he employed a common labourer and a tailor. He procured ordination for his own son—"the best stage player and gamester in the country"—and put him into his other living. This sounds scandalous, and is sometimes quoted as a direful illustration of the state of Shropshire before the civil war, quite after the manner of the typical Whig historian. But Baxter was a rather truculent Puritan, and the picture of two humble folks who could read, officiating at the lectern for a blind rector, and an athletic curate, with a further turn for private theatricals, will hardly strike the modern churchman as indicating a state of indolence and debauchery.

Leighton, a mile further on, is a beautiful village of old-fashioned cottages and obviously well cared for. The Hall,

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with the church, stands in fair grounds, all luxuriant with noble trees, and felicitously perched above the Severn, which glistens in snake-like coils from Cressage through the meadows below. This is the original nest of the Leightons of Loton, and a cross-legged effigy in the church, brought at the Dissolution from the neighbouring abbey of Buildwas, is said to represent Sir Titus of that name, who flourished early in the fourteenth century. On leaving the village the highway runs, well lifted up along the hillside, and upon intimate terms with the Severn, which winds below towards the grey pile of Buildwas Abbey, that in the now rapidly narrowing vale comes at this point into striking prominence. Beyond this charming foreground, the hills of the west country lift their broken, woody heights, and behind them again the loftier, barer summits of the Stretton moors cut the sky.

It was just below here in the river that an outbreak of some uncanny subterranean forces occurred about a century ago, an event that will survive in local memory as long as Severn flows. As described by the pens of those who saw it, it seems that the bed of the river suddenly burst into a thousand fragments and shot about thirty feet into the air, scattering masses of water and shoals of fish in every direction. Among other trifles flung into the air and landed at some distance from and above the river were two rocks and the trunk of an oak tree that had lain for years imbedded in the channel and in deep water. Furthermore, a barn on the slope above left its ancient site bodily, and after travelling some distance, collapsed into a newly-opened chasm with nothing but its roof visible.

It is full time that I should make inevitable reference to the Severn Valley Railway, which, starting from Shrewsbury, crosses the more level country at its own convenience and comes first in contact with the river at Cound. As the valley here begins to close in and the Severn at Buildwas starts upon its forty-mile journey through a deep trough, pressed upon both sides by the flanks of high hills, the railroad has no choice but to keep it company, emerging into the open again

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at Stourport, and soon afterwards at Hartlebury, joining the main line from Worcester to Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury. This last—however expeditious—is perhaps as dull a railway journey as you may take in England. Indeed, when bound for Shrewsbury or beyond, I frequently alight on the little Hartlebury platform, sometimes only occupied by a sprinkling of clergy, fresh from interviews with their bishop at the Palace close by. But this only after a struggle with guard and porters, who hold it inconceivable that anyone in their seven senses could deliberately leave a fast train for Shrewsbury to jog there by the Severn Valley R.R. As my point of view would be unintelligible, I endure their looks of pity, and even suspicion, with resignation. The S.V.R.R. is, in truth, a beautiful line; not comparable, to be sure, to the G.W.R. branch from Ruabon up the Dee to Bala, nor yet again to the Cambrian up the Wye, but well worth losing a little time for on a summer afternoon. A corner seat in a fairly empty carriage is quite as good as a motor run along this same line of country. You do not go any faster, you are not blown about, nor compelled to wear goggles and a January overcoat, while the railroad here is on far more continuously intimate terms with the river and valley than the highway. I am merely alluding here, of course, to an incidental and rapid survey of the Severn between Stourport, or Bewdley, and Shrewsbury, and this one is well worth while for any westward bound traveller who is not in a violent hurry.

To return, however, to Buildwas, striking both in itself and its situation, planted on a sloping green meadow, which practically fills the narrow floor of the gorge-like valley that the Severn now enters, the low massive grey tower of the abbey, with its long nave still roof-high, and row of Gothic arches, is wonderfully impressive. With high wooded hills both behind and before, and the broad river washing, with here brisk current, its meadowy fringes, the picture is one of those that the old monks were such unconscious masters in the art of making.

Though of slightly varying date, the whole of the church

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itself is twelfth century, in spite of the pointed arches which, however, rest on scalloped capitals. The choir has two and the nave five bays. The east window is of Norman character and in three lights, while the clerestory is also Norman. The four arches of the tower-space are complete, and these are also round-headed with Norman capitals. The chapter-house is still in good preservation, with a vaulted roof resting on four slender pillars, two circular and two octagonal. The abbot's quarters, however, seem to have been more or less embodied in an adjoining private house.

One of the first Cistercian Houses in England, and later on one of the wealthiest, Buildwas was founded by Roger de Clinton, the crusading bishop of Chester. There is said to have been a Saxon cell here in remote times occupied in Offa's time by a certain bishop of Lichfield who was annoyed at the Archbishopric being transferred to Canterbury, and nursed his grievance as a hermit, or probably, to be precise, as an anchorite. The abbots of Buildwas were summoned to Parliament. Matthew of Paris tells of one who resented Henry III's frequent appeals for money and boldly put it to the King that their prayers would be more effective. Henry replied that he wanted both, a demand which the abbot resented as illogical. For if the monks were robbed of their pittance how could they put the required energy into their supplications? The King no doubt would take his chance of that if the gold were forthcoming. Among the properties of the Abbey may be mentioned a richly embroidered cape worked by Fair Rosamund. As one stands on the soft green turf that overlays the floor of the nave, the surrounding hills shape themselves with striking effect in its great window arches and above all in that of the east end. More than any the sharp cone of the Wrekin makes a noble filling. The bridge across the river here is not, to be sure, quite in harmony with the abbey walls, for the Severn has been ruthless to the bridge builder at all times. Still, the single iron arch that spans it at Buildwas—the work, I believe, of Telford a century ago—is not ungraceful, while the view up

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and down the river when I last stood upon it remains with me. Thick fringes of willows and other foliage were whitening, and tall Lombardy poplars were swaying above the broad swift current in the warm breeze of a grey September evening, and an old half-timbered house on the bank, with Buildwas parish church on the slope above, struck an effective note in a charming scene of woodland, mead and water.

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CHAPTER VIII

WENLOCK AND BRIDGNORTH

THE Wrekin has been already described as dominating the landscape throughout all this country eastward of the Severn. It is barely two miles as the crow flies, though more by the steep and narrow lanes leading up to its base, from Buildwas, the nearest point to it on the river. A lovely, though I fancy little travelled route is this, by way of the hamlet of Little Wenlock some 500 feet above the Severn. Here the long climb up the ridge from the valley ends, and the road runs easily along the base of the huge humpy hill, amid pleasant fields or through bracken-carpeted woods. Thus approaching it from the river you might fancy yourself attacking one of the outstanding Shropshire hills to the westward, the Breidden, the Styper Stones, Caradoc or the Clees. But on surmounting the woody toe of the Wrekin an intimacy with the populace, such as belongs to none of these becomes at once apparent. Notice boards and one or two wooden buildings among the trees advertise the meat and drink, indispensable at frequent intervals to the more gregarious holiday-maker.

Glinting in the plain below to the eastward is the unabashed red brick of the uninteresting but prosperous town of Wellington, which is in fact the usual starting point for the Wrekin, and claims no doubt a sort of proprietary interest in it. One is looking hence too over not merely the flattest and least picturesque quarter of Shropshire, but a country in part smirched by coal fields. One's back in short is to the Border and the March country, one's face towards what is virtually the Midlands. Characteristics, customs,

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dialect, like the landscape, soon merge here, eastward of the Severn in those of the midland counties. The Welsh lilt which more or less distinguishes the common speech of the country west of the river soon fades away into one or other of the Midland dialects, or such as they have now become. At any rate the Wrekin, though above all others the typical and representative Shropshire hill opens its arms to the industrial workers from the west Midland country. They are fortunate in having ready access to it, not merely for the wide and beautiful prospect thereon obtained with all that such implies, but for the sylvan charms of its slopes, skirts and foot hills.

When I was here last, however, solitude reigned profound upon both hill-top and woodland. It was an October afternoon, and the mountain had retired into its long winter seclusion. Bright autumn sunshine flooded the saffron foliage of elm and birch, the russet of the bracken, the burnished ruddy gold of the half-turned oak leaves, while the rich red sandstone banks caught the fire and glowed beneath the shining columns of the lusty beeches that it nourished.

The isolation of the Wrekin, placed well to the eastward of the border ranges of Shropshire is mainly responsible no doubt for its particular and outstanding reputation, added to the fact that it is visible from every part of Shropshire. It is the tutelary height of a county that has many finer and loftier hills; a sort of rallying point for articulate patriotism. "All friends round the Wrekin" is *really* an old Shropshire toast, not a modern inspiration. Two hundred years ago the dramatist Farquhar used it as a matter of course. Other districts of England very likely make similar use of local landmarks in their convivial reunions and the like. But no other county in England has such a time honoured and felicitous object of invocation and such a universal rallying cry. Anyone familiar even with the surface of Shropshire would see at once how naturally this came about.

There are traces of an ancient fortification on the top of the hill, and it would be strange indeed if there were not,

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The extent of the view from the summit may be readily guessed at. Beyond the Border country and its ranges the loftier Welsh mountains are mostly visible, while to the eastward, beyond the green low lying west Midlands, the Black Country is plain to see. Far reaching as is the outlook from the Wrekin it is nevertheless not equal to that afforded by the Long Mynd above Stretton, from which under the most favourable conditions, you may see portions of every county in Wales.

From Buildwas it is only some three miles to Much Wenlock, a place of high renown among all who care for the past, not only in Shropshire but throughout England. A branch line from here to Craven Arms runs through it, which might prove occasionally convenient to the intending visitor. Wenlock stands in a cup 400 feet above the Severn valley. It is one of those little towns which the needs of a very limited agricultural area, helped in this case by one or two limestone quarries, just keep alive, and happily so for the better preservation of its noble relics. That Wenlock is little more than a good-sized village is only of importance to the outsider for the number of old half-timbered houses it thereby preserves. Small though it be it is a corporate borough with a charter from Edward IV, and a most beautiful black and white Guildhall (1589) resting on oak pillars.

But the great glory of Wenlock is of course its Benedictine Priory, of which enough remains to attract visitors from far and wide. There seem to have been two Saxon Foundations here, the one, rather shadowy, the other short lived. The first is connected with a princess, St. Milburgh, of the Mercian Royal house and was suppositiously destroyed by the Danes; the second with Leofric and his famous wife Godiva, who flourished just before the conquest. Whatever there then was of a monastery fell with the Norman advent to the disposal of our all powerful friend Roger de Montgomery, who in 1080 founded the present Priory as a dependency of the Abbey church of Clugny. As a further asset to its income the Saxon St. Milburgh, the first abbess, who by tradition was buried here,

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was spiritually resuscitated when a slab on the church floor breaking beneath the gambols of a sportive boy, revealed at the psychological moment an underlying tomb, which gave forth sweet odours. The identification of this as the resting-place of St. Milburgh presented after such unmistakable manifestations no difficulties whatever. The remains beneath were exhumed, and it is needless to add worked wonders and earned immense sums of money for the monks right up till the Dissolution. Its foreign dependence was severed by Richard II, but the Priory seems to have been the head and feeder of other Clugniac Houses in England, none of which by tbe way were abbeys.

The church was 330 feet in length, longer, that is, than several of our cathedrals. According to Mr. Augustus Hare there was a proposal at the Dissolution, on account of its size and great beauty, to retain it as a cathedral for Shropshire. When that county realises its natural ambition to constitute a diocese, it is Roger de Montgomery's other great Foundation, Shrewsbury Abbey, more fortunate than Wenlock in its treatment by time and man, that will undoubtedly be thus distinguished. The revenues of the Priory just before the Dissolution were returned at £431 per annum, placing it thereby among the wealthiest religious houses in Britain.

The remains of the great church, though fragmentary are both interesting and imposing and virtually roof high. The chief of these belong to the south side of the nave, the south transept, and in a lesser degree to the north transept, and are all in the Early English style. Above the surviving pointed windows, on clustered columns, of the south side of the nave is a triforium of lancet arches with a clerestory above that again. Like the vanished choir which was of the same period, the north and south walls of the chapter-house and doorways which remain are Norman. The wall space is decorated with three tiers of interlocked Norman arches one above the other resting on a single row of round shafts, which spring from a moulded ledge several feet above the ground. There is much beautiful detail in the chapter-house which is all part of the

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original work of the founder, Roger de Montgomery. It would be both impossible and superfluous here, to go over all the ground covered by this once noble church, the traces of which, such as the fragments of doors or windows, the bases of piers and such like form significant reminders of its former dimensions.

A very notable feature, however, is the Prior's house adjoining the lofty remains of the south transept with its appurtenances, now occupied as a private residence by Mr. Milnes Gaskell. This is mainly, I believe, fifteenth-century work and is a most beautiful and perfect survival of the domestic side of monastic life. The building is some 100 feet long, with a high steep gable roof and a double ambulatory along the eastern side. Lit above and below by two continuous rows of short arches suggestive of windows the outside produces an effect unlike anything of the kind I ever remember to have seen. The gardens of the house, which also abut on portions of the Priory church, strike a decorative and peaceful note on the scene and give that sense of abiding care and affection for the monuments of the past which all makes for harmony, rather than for that disturbing incongruity so often exhibited in the close association of the ancient and the modern.

The parish church, which adjoins the external precincts of the Priory, in no way "lets you down" in passing on to it from the latter. It is of a piece historically and architecturally with the rest, having been founded by the first monks of the Priory and still shows a good deal of Norman work. Indeed, the tower and nave are mainly Norman. The south aisles and Lady chapel are pointed thirteenth-century, while the chancel is much later and in the Perpendicular style. There are two carved corbels within, which are supposed to represent Henry III, who on his road to Wales sometimes stayed at the Priory, and Eleanor of Provence. There is also a priests' room over the porch.

No Wenlock patriot would tolerate the omission, whether by author or visitor, of the remarkable little Guildhall of which he is justly proud. The last time I was there, a panic prevailed

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lest some enterprising suffragette should pay it a visit, and its door was closed to all and sundry. Its two chambers, the Council room and Petty Sessions hall, which are panelled and richly decorated, owe something of their attraction to recent effort. But of the antiquity of the building, which in spite of its date, 1589, with the arms of Elizabeth over the Recorder's chair, is said to go far behind that, there is no doubt. The pillars of the butter market below, which support the hall, were used as whipping posts for refractory Wenlockers, and the clasps for their wrists may still be seen as well as the stocks.

I frankly regret my last visit to Wenlock. For I had hitherto always seen it flooded with summer sunshine, and it is the kind of place that particularly responds to such conditions and for reasons not readily expressed seems hyper-sensitive to adverse skies. And the October afternoon in question was one of the dreariest—not merely grey and melancholy, I do not mind that—but colourless, dank and dripping. A bad October day can be very bad in lack-lustre and depressing qualities, just as a supreme October day can excel anything perhaps but matchless June!

But to return to Buildwas—that is to say, if it is worth while to return there, instead of frankly abandoning the Severn for a time and heading across country by the pleasant seven miles of quiet highway that leads by Morville to its banks again at Bridgnorth. The fact is that from just below Buildwas downwards, for some five or six miles, the high river banks are disfigured by the coal, iron and other industries that have waxed and waned about them and back into the eastward country for nearly two centuries. These half-dozen miles form a strange and harsh interlude to the otherwise quiet and peaceful atmosphere, broken only by an occasional country town or cathedral city, through which the Severn wanders from its source to its mouth. It might be accounted a misfortune that the narrow gorge from Ironbridge to below Coalport is physically the most striking bit of the river since it left the Breidden and the Welsh frontier. Pent in between

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steep hills rising abruptly to some four or five hundred feet, the river forces its way along a narrow winding trough, stirred at times by a rocky bottom into pools and rapids that would do credit to the Wye or Usk. No road follows the valley, so steep is it and so narrow. They have all to make the labourious climb to the hill tops on either side, and thence wander on their various ways over hilly and uplifted plateaux. The Severn Valley railroad alone clings to the river, lifted well above it, and affords as good a survey of this defaced but even still rather striking valley as would probably content most people.

This is not a guide-book, so I do not feel called upon to descant upon either the iron works of Coalbrookdale, the tiles of Brosely, the china of Coalport, nor yet the drift of the subterranean minerals that have caused all this commotion. Unlovely villages cling to the steep hillsides, banks of slag and refuse present deplorable eyesores, and tall chimneys here and there spring from the river level or shoot skyward from the hill summits. It is a partial perhaps rather than complete disfigurement. For the woods still blow in Coalbrookdale while pastures and hedgerows even yet glow green and undefiled in their seasons, as saving interludes between the scars. One can still see how beautiful it must all have been before the ironfounders descended upon it. But this was a very long time ago, so long indeed as almost to give a touch of romance to the story. For when the old iron men of Sussex had burnt up all their wood, or at least were prohibited by Royal edict from destroying any more, the Dudleys in Worcestershire early in the seventeenth century began experimenting in pit coal in lieu of charcoal. It was about 1700, however, before Abraham Darby, also a native of Worcestershire, began to succeed on a large scale, though this was near Bristol. Removing in time to the Severn here at Coalbrookdale, the said Darby, after using up all the wood and making a great reputation for pots, pans, and kettles, reverted to coal smelting again in his old age. This was continued upon a greater scale by his sons-in-law, till in 1784 these works were

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the largest in England. They still flourish and are still, I believe, in the hands of the family who first founded them. But numerous industries, as above indicated, have sprung up since, beside and above the river, while the high plateau country in the direction of Wellington is sprinkled freely with furnaces, collieries and brickyards. The great iron bridge, too, which by a single arch leaps the river from hill to hill is no device of yesterday, as the discomfited wanderer by Severn side, coming suddenly upon all this turmoil, might imagine. For this also is due to the enterprise of one of these early Darbys; nay, was actually constructed by him in 1780. And not only that, but it was the first successful bridge of its kind, to wit, a huge cast-iron arch (120 feet span) in Europe. It has stood the test of time marvellously, and as the work of so early a period Stephenson regarded it as a wonder of efficiency and bold conception.

In less than five miles, however, the Severn shakes itself free of this brief industrial orgy, and about Coalport station, the gorge still continuing, assumes as innocently rural an aspect as if the recent clamour were a thousand miles away. And so it might be, for Linley lies just above on the right bank, and behind that again Willey, Lord Forrester's seat with its fine woodlands. Linley, on the S.V. railroad, is the station for Apley Park, which here fringes the left, or opposite bank of the river. The latter is spanned by a private bridge, close to the little station, and the Park is open to visitors on a certain day or days in the week. The House, over-looking the river, erected on the site of the old one, is comparatively modern.

But the chief attraction which Apley offers to the stranger lies in what is known as the Terrace: a high wooded sandstone ridge at the back of the deer park, traversed the whole length of its crest, about a mile and a half, by a grassy drive. These bare words, however, convey but a poor idea of Apley Terrace, so inadequately named. For upon acquaintance it suggests comparison with the far better known and widely visited ridge in Hawkestone Park, the late seat of the Hill family in North Shropshire, and even so by no means to its

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disadvantage. I was fortunate in my visit to Apley, for the autumn tints were at their best, the skies at their bluest, and the October sunshine at its brightest. Moreover, I had the whole scene to myself and time was no object. The steep red sandstone ridge, along whose crest this uplifted turf-clad avenue pursues its quite enchanting way must be some 300 ft. to 400 ft. above the deer park and the river below. I had been prepared for something good, but for not quite such a treat as this. As a subject in which the Severn herself plays a conspicuous part I would say without hesitation that in the whole length of the river from the Breidden to Gloucester there is nothing quite equal to it. For as a complete and perfect picture the sylvan charm of the foreground and of the very vantage point from which one enjoys it, adds no little to the general effect of the whole outlook.

A broad, grassy drive, fringed upon either side by over-arching trees, follows with graceful curves and slight undulations the edge of the precipitous steep, itself thickly clad with every kind of foliage. Between the gaps which art or nature have opened in the foliage one looks down upon the river far below, sparkling in broad and here rapid current through the woody parklands where herds of deer are browsing. Beyond the river spreads the pleasant broken country of South Shropshire, ridge upon ridge, backed by the more distant peaks of the Clee hills, the Cone of Caradoc and the blue waving heights of the Long Mynd. Looking northward again the river shows itself to singular advantage running out of the long gorge we have just left and flashing in a big salmon pool with woods upon both sides and Apley house standing rather majestically upon the terraces above; while behind all the lofty Wrekin displays at this angle that abrupt sugar loaf outline with which this side of the country associates it. Southward and down stream there is an altogether different, but no less striking picture. For here the Severn, once more in sober mood, winds, as I saw it, in shining sunlit reaches along the foot of woodclad heights and by the fringe of green meadows to the fine upstanding rock upon which

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the Castle of Bridgnorth, with its town and spires clustering about it, is so beautifully perched.

Up here in the high wood the westering sun, which in its slow downward progress to its couch behind the Welsh hills lit the winding trail of the Severn beneath us, fired also the autumn glories of the forest trees. Great beeches, Spanish and horse chestnuts, oak and ash, elm and birch all contributed their various shades of radiancy to the woodland pageant and their tribute to the intermittent showers of golden leaves that the light autumn breeze was scattering upon the green carpet of the drive. Isolated Scotch firs of noble stature and ruddy stem struck here and there that note of contrast amid the gay autumn foliage which is by far their most effective contribution to English landscape. Missel-thrushes were gathering about the still lingering berries in the wood and stray cushats making tumultuous outburst from the deep harbourage of some forest oak.

The present mansion was built about a century ago by the Whitmores, who owned the great Apley estate from the time of Elizabeth till 1867, when it was purchased by Mr. Foster, an industrial magnate of the neighbourhood, whose family still own it. A Salopian author, writing soon after its erection, describes it as "a splendid modern mansion erected at immense expense, its turreted front with massive embattled towers at each end, and its Gothic chapel producing a fine effect". It did not do so, however, on Augustus Hare who curtly dismisses it as "an ugly castellated mansion". This is quite unfair; for shorn of a few inharmonious superfluities it might at least be termed well proportioned and imposing. Such divergent verdicts are of no importance here save that Apley is one of the few great country houses which stand actually on the banks of Severn, between Shrewsbury and the estuary. Its site at any rate, that, as already mentioned, of the Whitmores' earlier house, is most beautiful. It may be also interesting to note that before their occupation it belonged to the Lucys of Charlecote, of Shakespeare celebrity.

The Whitmores were a powerful and tenacious race and

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are still in the county lower down the river. They represented Bridgnorth in Parliament for about two hundred and fifty years and the local records for centuries bristle with their names. They were landowners in the neighbourhood long before they purchased Apley. Sir William Whitmore who owned it during the civil war period was owner of Bridgnorth Castle at the same time. He was a Royalist like most of the Shropshire gentry and was captured in his own house to which the Parliamentarians laid seige. He redeemed his sequestrated property after the close of the war for £5000. An attempt was made by other Royalists to recover Apley, but they were defeated with the loss of 400 prisoners and several slain, among whom was a Herefordshire notable, Sir William Crofts, a descendant, by the way, of Owen Glyndwr, whose younger daughter married a Crofts.

The Terrace gradually trends downward by footpaths, always following delightful woodland ways to the lodge gates upon the high road, which last follows the river for a mile and a half to Bridgnorth. Coming down by this entrance gate, together with the road from Wellington, is a bright little stream, the Worf, gurgling beneath forest trees and making just here a charming entry into the Severn, which slides along between high banks and with smooth current upon an almost straight course to the gorge at Bridgnorth.

Up the Worf valley, too, are some pleasant spots. Davenport, the seat of the Davenports, enfolds the stream in its demesne for some distance, after which it comes rippling past the village of Worfield, an attractive place, scattered picturesquely around a fine, red sandstone church, with lofty steeple and spacious, well-tended graveyard. Besides other monuments within the church to Davenports and Bromleys is a fine canopied marble altar tomb to Sir George Bromley and his wife. If mere impressions are permissible, one is strong within me that the members of this great Tudor lawyer's family are more widely commemorated upon gorgeous altar tombs in Shropshire and Worcestershire than the notables of any other stock.

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The river road to Bridgnorth runs right under the shadow of that precipitous and woody red sandstone ridge that here continues for many miles and of which the Terrace at Apley is a section. Its soft face, curiously wrought into all kinds of natural caverns, hollows and crags, rises hereabouts to a lofty bluff some 300 feet above the vale. Hither the folk of Bridgnorth are wont to turn their steps in their leisure hours by woodland ways, and take survey of the noble prospect of their town and valley in which they take so just a pride.

Bridgnorth has been compared by its admirers to all sorts of impossible places in Europe and Asia, from Jerusalem to Gibraltar. I could mention many English towns that have had the first left-handed compliment paid them by persons of strong theological proclivities and apparently none whatever for perspective, colouring, atmosphere, and one might add for humour or common sense. Others again, with equal if somewhat different limitations, see in every town upon a rock, whither girdled by British meadows and homesteads, or by a roaring sea, a second Gibraltar. Bridgnorth isn't in the least like Jerusalem even if the quality of its earth, air, products, and architecture were arid and Asiatic, and not moistly emerald and Salopian. One might say it was still less like Gibraltar, if that were possible, but it is not. For pride of pose, however, combined with charm of outlook, Bridgnorth, undoubtedly, has few, if any, equals in England. Moreover it is unsmirched, and ranks high in its store of ancient buildings. In regard to the first two qualities, boasting the same dominant fortress and encircling river, Richmond, Yorks, might suggest itself as a fitting subject for comparison. Ludlow, otherwise unapproached in Shropshire, and to my thinking unmatched in all England, cannot challenge Bridgnorth in that distinction of lofty pose which makes the Severn town, I think, almost unique. The saner eulogists of Bridgnorth's beauties draw the line at Oriental or Southern parallels, and seeing that there are scores of towns perched on high rocks in Western Europe, in something approaching our colouring and atmosphere, content themselves with the con-

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vention that it is very "Continental". Yes, so far! But how can anyone familiar with the old towns of the Continent fail to feel their utter difference from our own in almost every architectural detail, every evidence of human touch, life, and thought? An Englishman, who can fancy he is abroad in any English town, must either be deficient in ordinary powers of observation, or be possessed of an imagination that defies the obvious. It is neither here nor there that most old Continental towns show an altogether higher aesthetic standard than their contemporaries in this country, just as our domestic landscape excels that of any country in charm and detail. The very reason that made our forbears comparatively indifferent to towns made them, quite accidentally, I admit, supreme artists in perfecting the landscape.

Bridgnorth is not Continental in the least. It is typically old English, and crowns the ridge of a high promontory with the castle standing out alone upon its southern point. It is rich in old houses, old customs, and old names. Politically, it has always been one of the most conservative towns in England. There is indeed a well-known old saying which classed all impossible eventualities with that of shaking the Toryism of Bridgnorth "all on one side like a Bridgnorth election". It still seems to hold its ancient faith unshaken. I am not alluding to a mere election majority. Bridgnorth boasts itself as unique among country towns, and with the licence permissible to a traditional and treasured characteristic, will tell you that there isn't a Radical in the place.

Before the days of Edward I, or thereabouts, Bridgnorth was known as Brugge, otherwise "The bridge," being in fact a namesake of that ever-famous town of Flanders. As there appears to have been a wooden bridge a little lower down, the development to its present form of designation is obvious. It is curious that its earlier and Saxon founders did not seize upon the present splendidly defensive situation, but set their modest burgh upon a lower elevation, whose shape, together with other evidence, almost certainly marks it out as the site of the fortress erected against the Danes by the

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energetic Princess Elfreda, the daughter of King Alfred. The spot, now a meadow, is known to-day as Pam-pudding hill, and is chiefly notable as the site of Cromwell's batteries when he was besieging the town. But the real beginnings of Bridgnorth were laid upon its high rock in the shape of the once great castle, of which the shattered keep alone remains. Thrown off the perpendicular by the explosions incidental to Cromwell's destruction of the fortress after its capture, this massive tower, like that famous leaning one of Pisa, has defied the laws of gravitation ever since. Leaning over at an angle of seventeen degrees, upon its conspicuous perch, the first sight of it is apt to disconcert the unknowing stranger coming up the valley even to passing qualms for the condition of his health!

Robert de Belesme, the son of our old friend Roger de Montgomery, built the castle about 1101. In this case, he did not build, like his father, against the King's enemies, but against the King himself. He was involved with his namesake, Robert of Normandy, in his serious row with Henry I, and built Bridgnorth, it is said, in a hurry after he had burnt his boats. Florence of Worcester tells us that the work went on by night and day and that Robert's Welsh feudatories, from Montgomeryshire, no doubt, were persuaded to the task by promises of land, gifts, and stock. Robert had already lost his southern estates, and Henry was not yet free to hunt him to the Welsh border. At any rate the castle, a very large one, was completed within a year, and the fragment surviving most assuredly shows no trace of hurry or skimping, being prodigiously massive, to say nothing of having stood in the attitude of a skater on the outside edge for nearly three hundred years, and apparently prepared to maintain the same uncanny pose for any number of centuries to come. For there is a tower at the great castle of Caerphilly in Glamorganshire also shifted by an explosion, two hundred and fifty years before this one, by Glyndwr, as is supposed, which leans over at about the same angle and with equal unconcern.

King Henry arrived, however, in due course and according

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to the Worcester chronicler with "the whole army of England" at his back. But Belesme had fled to his late father's castle at Shrewsbury and left a Corbet to bear the brunt. This he did for three weeks, till it occurred to the Norman barons about the King, always jealous of too much sovereign power, that the crushing of Robert de Belesme might not be an altogether salutary precedent for themselves, and in a body they requested his pardon. The Commons of Shropshire, however, to the number of 3000, who preferred any King to a Norman baron, made a counter demonstration and begged Henry to go through with the business, which he did. Having threatened Corbet and his whole garrison with a halter if they did not surrender the castle immediately, they chose the wiser part, after which Henry marched to Shrewsbury and squared accounts with the rebellious Robert by a sentence of banishment to Normandy for life, and the loss of his English estates. The Anglo-Norman baron, almost till his virtual extinction by the Wars of the Roses, seems to have been a positive altruist in his passion for power, and never from a normal standpoint to have known when he was well off. Castles, manors, wine, women, horses, hounds, game, forests, and retainers seem again and again to have weighed nothing in the scale against pride of place or power, if some problematical increase in that direction was to be gained. Smug prosperity at any rate, was no part of their creed. They seem to us comfortable folk like mad and restless egotists. Perhaps there is more to be said for their ethics than we are apt to allow!

This is no place to trace the part which Bridgnorth Castle played in baronial quarrels through the middle ages. It is enough that it soon became a Royal castle to be tilted at by Marcher barons or occasionally recaptured by the Crown from Royal constables who had ran amuck. It was one of the bases for conducting war against the Welsh, though out of reach of their aggressions. Large sums of money were spent in enlarging and strengthening it and incidentally it may be noted that the miserable Edward II, was dragged from a

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brief refuge here to his death at Berkeley near the mouth of the Severn. Bridgnorth Castle, though nominally belonging to the Apley estate, is let for ever on a peppercorn rent to the town. The inner bailey is now graciously tricked out in lawns and flower beds from which the citizens of Bridgenorth survey the windings of the Severn from as noble a vantage point of this particular kind as could be found in England. King Charles, who was here several times and ought, poor gentleman, to have been as good a judge of castle sites and prospects as anyone, is said to have declared there was no other like it in all his dominions.

The old castle church of St. Mary Magdalene was replaced more than a century ago, after the manner of the period, by a quite elaborate Pagan temple or what is described in handbooks as a Grecian building. It was designed by the great Telford of road-making note who possibly had tender feelings for St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, his regular place of worship. I wonder what would be said now if the replacing of a famous Norman church was entrusted to a firm of Great George Street engineers! The story of the founding of the old church is one of Bridgnorth's most treasured legends and must not be overlooked. For it was originally raised at Quatford, two miles down the river, by Adelisa, wife of Roger de Montgomery, in honour of the spot where she first met him after a perilous journey across the Channel, and in consequence of a vow made during the terrors of the tempest to offer this tribute if she reached home in safety. Subsequently a castle, and it is supposed a bridge, was built there about 1085. When Robert de Belesme, however, established himself at Bridgnorth, he removed, according to Ordericus, the Quatford settlement, including the church, to his new castle.

Stretching back from the castle grounds is the High Street, still following the combe of the ridge on whose slopes, particularly the eastern side, the bulk of the town lies. This long and handsome street, enclosing an old town hall in its centre and displaying many quaint half-timbered buildings, terminates in the North gate, which consists of three arches

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beneath a crenellated tower, restored, to save it from collapse, a few years ago. Just within it on the west side, some fifteenth century gabled houses still defy the ravages of time, as I can assert with confidence having spent several comfortable weeks in one of them. The half-timbered town hall which stands, as already mentioned, in the middle of the High Street has a curious origin, having once been an old barn resting obscurely in a field near Wenlock. It was purchased by the town after the Cromwellians had destroyed their former Hall and set up on stone arches since faced with brick in its present position. With its well-kept timbers, plaster, and stained glass windows, one would never guess its lowly origin. Among the customs still maintained, and very briskly too by the conservative folk of Bridgnorth, is "dancing in the street". For on many nights during the finer weeks of summer men and maidens of all classes falling into groups more or less no doubt according to their degree, turn the long wide High Street into an outdoor ball-room and to the strains of the town band, trip it merrily for two or three hours. American tourists come to Bridgnorth on purpose to witness this old-time spectacle, and no doubt are well repaid by it. I have never been in Bridgnorth on a summer night myself, but I have no doubt that the spectacle of an English country throng dancing in the moonlight before their old gabled houses, would stir most effectually the historic emotions of our visiting cousins, who for obvious reasons are even more susceptible to such suggestive pageants than ourselves.

The Parish Church stands just off the High Street and upon the same ridge. It is finely planted in an open space filled by a well-cared-for graveyard which is thick with the tombstones of Bridgnorth worthies and embellished by a fringe of buildings of sixteenth and seventeenth century date. The many gabled Tudor Grammar School is the best of these and fronts the churchyard. The additions necessary for reconstructing it, like so many other old foundations, into a modern Intermediate school are happily behind and out of sight. Bridgnorth Grammar School, like its neighbours of the same

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class at Ludlow and elsewhere, did good service in its day and has turned out a reasonable list of notables. The genius *loci*, however, of these ecclesiastical precincts is neither a bishop, rector, nor saint, though many such have left their mark here, but a plain Shropshire Colonel, one Billingsley, commemorated, through the pious munificence of his relatives by some alms-houses facing the church. The Colonel, merely a soldier, who did his duty by King Charles, whose man he was, fell in battle with the Parliamentarians on this very graveyard. It was in this successful attack on the town, hitherto held for the King, in March, 1646, by the Cromwellian infantry who opened the north gate for their cavalry that this hero, then in command of the garrison, fell. His sword and coat of arms still hang in the church. After this the Royalists retired to the castle amid some hostile demonstrations from the hitherto loyal populace, a fact which seems to have puzzled a mid nineteenth century local historian of strong Royalist sympathies. It is no doubt readily accounted for by the reaction that swept over the West Midland and Border counties towards the close of the war. Forced levies, exactions, and above all the misconduct of the King's demoralised troops had more than half alienated the populace of the west, who, as we know went to the length of banding themselves together for their mutual protection against both parties.

It was now that the last siege of Bridgnorth Castle, granted by Charles I to the Whitmores, took place. The Royalists, still in possession there under Sir Lewis Kirke, bombarded the church which the enemy were using as a powder magazine, and incidentally set fire to much of the town. The Parliamentary cannon, as already stated, were planted on Pam-pudding hill, to the southward of the castle, and thence pounded away fruitlessly for three weeks getting more than they gave from the high-pitched castle guns. One of the latter, during this cannonade actually sent a ball down the mouth of a Cromwellian gun, on the Pam-pudding battery, about half a mile distant, and burst it, killing the men in charge. An attempt at mining the rock in the cliff beneath the castle church, where

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the garrison's ammunition was stored, was now made. Apparently unable to hinder this fatal procedure, the castle capitulated on honourable terms and was afterwards destroyed, all save the mutilated leaning tower, which resisted the utmost efforts of the engineers.

St. Leonards, the parish church, though not a pagan temple, is from necessary restoration a little disappointing, occupying as it does so beautiful and dominant a site in a town so eloquent of the past. The civil war havoc seems responsible for the premature decay of the old church, a Norman foundation but mainly of later construction, which Leland beheld with rapture. The tower is modern. The nave, said to be the widest in any English parish church, is very much restored, though an old oak roof is still *in situ*. Apart from the Billingsley relics and some curious cast-iron tomb plates there are no monuments of historic interest. A theological library presented by a former master of the Grammar School is lodged in a handsome octagonal building erected for the purpose outside the chancel. He was one of those devoted and learned old scholars no doubt, who were to be found in a hundred English country towns in the days of the Georges, before the public school as we know it in increasing strength, numbers, and popularity wiped them and their calling virtually out of existence; picturesque, often dignified figures, with an honoured place of their own in the local hierarchy, many of whose members still cherished something of the awe which a practised arm had thrashed into them as boys, together with their Greek and Latin, mingled with a kind of affection that under our British code is so common an aftermath. Many of us can remember some of these survivals, who so unostentatiously held up the lamp of learning and culture among the Philistines.

It is a tremendous drop from this main ridge of the town to the Severn below, but to this steep slope, sometimes in short terraces, sometimes by almost perpendicularly descending highways, the larger and poorer half of Bridgnorth mainly clings. Most of the houses are old, and here and there it must

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be frankly admitted rather squalid. The narrow winding streets are so steep that horse traffic going up and down them exhibit to the unaccustomed eye a sense of almost super-equine effort. As a matter of fact not much of it now attempts this struggle. For a fine new road has been cut from the bridge, right round the base of the rock below the castle and by a circuit of about four times the distance, motor cars can spare their driver's nerves, and, with traps of all degrees, compass the journey to the High-town on a gentler grade and in quicker time. The foot passenger descends, or the reverse, by many curious winding stairways, cut, and at times very deeply hewn, in the red sanstone rock. One of these has over two hundred steps. But modern luxury has invaded even Bridgnorth and a sort of cog railway, or lift, said to be the shortest and steepest in England now connects the High with the Low town. Below the castle itself the steep is clear, being more or less precipitous, and is either bosky with foliage or displays the naked red rock to great advantage.

At the foot of the town a stone bridge of six arches, built over a century ago, when the taste in bridges was better than in churches, spans the Severn, which here expanding into livelier moods upon a stony bed is of considerable width. Beyond a narrow steep where lies an old suburb of the town containing a good many half-timbered and early Georgian houses, rises the high red sandstone woodclad ridge which we followed from Apley. By the banks of the river there was plenty of trade going on in a former day. But the freight barges have vanished, or practically so; skiffs and pleasure boats seem now the only craft moored to the old wharves, for which I should imagine between here and the rapids at Apley there is an admirable four-mile course. Below the bridge the shallows run into a broad tumbling pool while a wooded island with a residence on it near the east bank makes a pretty feature in this down stream prospect. At the foot of the town near the bridge stands the most interesting half-timbered house in Bridgnorth. It is dated 1580 and inscribed "Except the Lord Build the Owse the labours thereof avail nothing.

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Erected by R. Fos," otherwise Richard Forester, who was a Severn trader, the wharf where he loaded his barges still going by his name.

The house fortunately escaped the civil war conflagration. It is said that his neighbours thought it too pretentious and named it Forester's Folly, an unfeeling taunt that has been flung at many score of building enterprises since with generally better reason. Posterity, however, is grateful to Forester, for it is a beautiful old building of three projecting storeys, the upper one carrying as many large gabled dormers, while the tracery of the woodwork is most ornate. But this is not the only reason why Bridgnorth takes pride in the house. For whether Forester was a fool or not—probably not; merely a man of better taste than his neighbours—he certainly built his house according to the familiar adage literally interpreted for "a wise man to live in" later on. For no less a person than Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore, author of the Reliques, anecdotes, and other works familiar to everyone, was born here in 1729. He was the son of a grocer in Bridgnorth, whose father had been of like following, and also Mayor of Worcester and a cadet of the famous Northumbrian House. The further fact that the wharfinger who built the residence which both families successively occupied, was pretty sure to have been a member of the well-known Shropshire landed family of Forrester, is a rather striking instance among thousands, of the absurd fiction, that English landowners before snobbery began (*temp. circa*, Geo. II) regarded trade with contempt. The younger son, prior to that period, followed callings almost as a matter of course, still often wearing his coat of arms, that a younger son in these days who hadn't got even a grandfather, much less a genuine coat of arms, would shy at with horror. There may or may not be excellent reasons for this, but they are quite irrelevant. It is the hardy fiction above alluded to which is so perverse. Two other Irish bishops in the century before Percy's came out of Bridgnorth, but, as they were probably no better than most Anglican prelates who drew salaries out of the Emerald Isle

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in those dark days, their names do not seem worth preserving. Percy, however, proved a model Irish bishop at a time when most of his colleagues lived away in London, Paris, or Bath. But it is as a zealous preserver and reviver of old British ballads, poems and legends, that the world remembers him with justifiable gratitude. He, too, was educated at the old Grammar School here, which for a small establishment seems to have made quite a specialty of prelates, for in modern times, Bishops Fraser and Mackenzie both stand to its credit, as well as that great lawyer, the late Lord Lingen.

Carpet weaving is an old Bridgnorth industry, and a good sized factory, east of the river, still maintains an apparently active trade on the site of an old friary. The old town mill, nearly a mile up the river, is the subject of charters as early as Henry III, and for centuries performed the relatively picturesque task of grinding the civic grain. It is now a castellated red sandstone spinning mill, with the inevitable tall chimney, a most unromantic eyesore in the otherwise stainless vale.

The soft red sandstone of all this part of the Severn valley has tempted both the saintly of ancient days and the needy of later ones to burrow in it. Some of the latter dwelt quite recently in the eastern face of the cliff at Bridgnorth, till the awakened views on urban sanitation drove them forth, and their late abodes remain as out-houses. More romantic than these, however, are other cave dwellings across the river in the wood-crowned face of the heights, known immemorially and mysteriously as the Queen's parlour. These have been evacuated even still more recently, and together with the rather celebrated Hermitage, which, I believe, was thus desecrated, are now shown to the curious stranger for the sum of sixpence collected at a cottage on the spot, that itself owes something of its construction to nature. A narrow platform cut in the rock opens into these primitive dwellings, for which only a door, and perhaps a further wooden partition, was necessary to the standard of comfort demanded. But the Hermitage is really interesting for its remote origin and

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associations. It boasts four chambers, one of which over 30 feet long contains the remains of the chapel with piscina, arches, and some steps leading to the upper cave, which, like the lower one, is now roofless. This is said to be of the tenth century. Leland speaks of "the rock of Atheldarstone in the forest of Morf," which last in his day covered all the country hereabouts on both banks of the Severn. Nothing for certain, however, is known concerning this cell before the fourteenth century, when there is an entry in the patent roll which runs "Whereas Rogere de Burghton, chaplain, inflamed with the fervour of devotion, has arranged to take the habit of a hermit and has made instant supplication to the king to grant him for life the hermitage of Atheldarstone on the high road near Bridgnorth, now void wherein to dwell, that he may pray for the King, Queen Phillipa, and their children. The King has granted his request."

The original Saxon hermit, Ethelward, is supposed to have been a brother of King Athelstan alluded to in the entry. Hermit and anchorite are commonly regarded, I fancy, as interchangeable terms. As a matter of fact only the anchorite was a strict recluse. By comparison with him the hermit was a man of lively and sociable habit. He held service in his chapel for all wayfarers that came along or preached in the open air. He was a bit of a farmer, too, and in his small way brought waste land into cultivation. He tended the sick and collected alms for the poor. He made roads and bridges, and when near the sea erected signals for mariners. In short, he seems to have been a kind of practical country parson on his own account, a general utility man, invaluable, one would imagine, in those rude days. He even "took pupils," if the phrase be permissible. The anchorite, on the other hand, was a true solitary, concerned only for his own soul and with his own thoughts, ready to purchase salvation according to his lights by isolation, fasting, and general discomfort. Nor were these picturesque individuals quite the free lances they are generally supposed to have been. They could not, for instance, adopt the calling either

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of hermit or anchorite without licence from an abbot if a monk, or from a bishop if of the secular order. Nor was this all, for they were inducted to their cells by quite a solemn ritual. The day preceding the ceremony the candidate was expected to confess "all the sins of his life that he could remember," and taste nothing but bread and water, and to keep a night vigil in the chapel of the monastery nearest to his new quarters. The occasion was further celebrated by a full choral service in honour of his dedication. He was then qualified to take possession of his primitive incumbency. Even the dedication service differed in the case of an anchorite and a hermit.

Two miles north of the town, spreading over undulating upland above the west bank of the river, is Stanley Park, with its fine timber and charming glades and ferny dingles, twisting Severnwards. The house is Tudor, with a gabled front, flanked by a massive square tower. It passed from the Billingsley family apparently at the death of the heroic colonel of Bridgnorth churchyard fame, and now belongs to the Tyrwhitt Wilson family. The parish church of Astley Abbott, close by, near the main Bridgnorth road, is attractively situated amid a profusion of fine trees. Scarcely any of it is 300 years old, but it has the curious dedication of St. Calixtus, and was the burying-place of the Billingsleys, including the colonel. It has established a curiously fortuitous claim to attention by a faded garland and a pair of white gloves hung in the corner of the church, in memory of a young woman who died fifty years ago on her marriage eve.

Just to the westward here is the estate of the Acton family, Aldenham Hall, lying, however, three miles away from the Severn near the village of Morville, which for its church alone is worth a visit. Being one of the ancient families of Shropshire, and busy always in its affairs, none of its members have, I imagine, achieved such world-wide fame as the last squire of Aldenham and Professor of History at Cambridge. Whether the late Lord Acton was or was not the most learned man in Europe, he was frequently so designated in very high quarters,

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which is a sufficient testimony to his great reputation for ordinary purposes, and this reputation is the more notable in that he left comparatively little of his own work behind him. The following incident may be appreciated by some of my readers. In a newspaper controversy in a Canadian paper, many years ago, concerning a certain historical work, with a Canadian man of letters (of sorts), whose head a local reputation had somewhat unduly swollen, I was able to quote Lord Acton in support of my contentions. I was foolish enough to think this settled the matter! Not a bit of it! "Does your correspondent," replied my ingenuous adversary, "really suppose that I value a man's opinion *simply because he is a Peer!*"

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CHAPTER IX

BRIDGNORTH TO WORCESTER

> Near at hand, the wide
> Majestic wave of Severn slowly rolls
> Along the deep, divided glebe, its flood,
> And trading bark with low-contracted sail
> Linger among the reeds and copsy banks,
> To listen and to view the joyous scene.—*Dyer.*

I HAVE never felt any strong call to quotation from that portentous poem, the *Polyolbion*, which sooner or later seems to over-master most writers on rivers. It is altogether too prosaically catholic and geographical, in spite of its archaic interest and occasional poetic flashes. Moreover, its very impartiality leaves one cold. The Trent or the Dee are all the same to Drayton, which is not perhaps surprising, as the poet had probably never set eyes upon one in twenty of the rivers he invoked with their presiding genii, and very likely wrote much of it in London from a map! It is difficult to trace in it the same hand as penned that stirring send-off ode "Forward Heroic Souls" to the little ship's company which lay on Christmas Day of 1608 in the Thames, destined to sow the first seeds of British Empire in the Western Continent. Dyer, however, who wrote more than a century later, and must not be judged by the above rather artless lines, knew and loved the rivers that run out of Plinlimmon, for he was born on one of them in the Vale of Towy,

> That soft tract
> Of Cambria, deep embayed, Dimetian land
> By green hills fenced, by ocean's murmur lull'd.

"In an age of city poets" (the early eighteenth century), says a distinguished modern critic, "he found his inspiration

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on the hillside and by the stream." He could use his brush too as well as his pen on landscape, and was, moreover, a Westminster scholar. *Grongar Hill* is a poem full of freshness, feeling, melody, and felicitous touches, worthy of the beautiful stretch of the Towy it commemorates. Dr. Johnson jeered at him, but Gray and Wordsworth, who are more to the purpose, held a diametrically opposite opinion. Dyer knew and loved the Severn too. He was the reverse of prolific, and one might wish that he had given us another *Grongar Hill* from the vantage point of Bridgnorth Castle or Apley terrace. Such scenes were in precise sympathy with his taste and genius, and the Severn unfortunately has produced few bards.

The fact that Wolverhampton and the great Midland Black Country are only about fifteen miles to the westward of all these sylvan and pastoral scenes, comes upon one betimes as something of a shock. One is not thinking of the Midlands, whether clear or smoky, here perilously near them, as Sabrina now rolls her mountain-fed waters. The atmosphere of the Border counties and all thereby implied, both obvious and subtle, in a measure always clings about her banks. The uplifted ranges of the Welsh frontier are never beyond speaking distance. The tributary brooks that at intervals make little woody breaks in her right bank, still hold their trout and grayling and keep the lively habit of Border streams. The white-faced Hereford still holds his own on river-side meadows. The black-faced Shropshire sheep still prevails upon the hill pastures. The slight Welsh lilt yet lingers on the peasant's tongue, and, indeed, stays there with trifling modifications till it asserts itself again more definitely by the brackish waters of the Monmouth shore. Hitherto the Severn has divided nothing, even in the remote past, but parishes, townships, and Welsh commotes. To the gorge at Buildwas it has been running with all its peculiar, local gyrations a general west-to-east course, cutting impartially through tribes and races, ancient and modern. Even if it roughly marked about Montgomery the division between Silures and Ordivices, it was the

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mountain ranges rather than its there comparatively small stream which set their bounds.

Here, however, the Severn, now running due south, begins to play the rôle in retrospect of a great historic barrier. Not only because the direction of its course intercepted the chief line of movements of our earlier warring races, but from the mere fact that from here downward, and most certainly from Bewdley, the Severn valley in its then condition was a line of natural cleavage—a tangled maze of wood, swamp, and running waters that was practically impassable. British tribes were parted by it. And when the Saxons ultimately crossed the Severn, Christian methods of conquest succeeded the Pagan orgies of massacre and extirpation. The Britons remained, to be absorbed generally, perhaps, in an inferior situation, but sometimes, as we know, in homogeneous communities of free men, having equal rights in local government with their Saxon neighbours, and sharing their wars against the still unconquered Britons of Wales. All this gave to the land west of the Severn barrier a particular character, more especially as dense forests lay back from the river valley both in Shropshire and Worcestershire, and emphasised the cleavage between the intensely Saxon Midland and the Saxon British trans-Severn country. With the Norman Conquest, no doubt, the river itself had become more bridled, its course more defined, and its valley more passable; but by then it had done its work ethnologically and the mark of it will be there for all time.

But the Norman Conquest, by its laborious and protracted character over the Welsh border, intensified, if anything, the difference between the districts which faced one another across the Severn. The one was always confronting turbulent Wales and was mixed up directly or indirectly in peace and war with the great Border barons, the Lord Marchers, with their Welsh connections. The other was essentially Midland and had no particular concern with such things. Its people, as I have shown, were of a rather different breed and speak to-day with a different accent and intonation. This is, of course, but a

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rough indication on broad lines of the part the Severn has played in the making of England, and is not intended to suggest that a village on the east bank of its now confined smooth-flowing tide presents, so far as I know, any characteristics not shared by its neighbour on the west bank. But get back a little on either side and you will quickly find how much meaning there still is in the old term so common in the middle ages of "The land beyond Severn". No other river in England has had such past significance and for such long ages.

Crossing the Severn at Bridgnorth, and taking the road which the milestones proclaim as bound for Kidderminster, a distant town that haply does not concern us here, the Severn valley continues to afford a succession of delightful views. A quarter-mile breadth of level meadow land, sprinkled anon with forest trees, fringes the near bank, while bosky cliffs rise along its further shore. Quatford, the mother in a fashion of Bridgnorth, as already noted, stands out finely on a woody sandstone ridge upon the river's eastern bank. From its churchyard a view upstream of Bridgnorth itself, perched on its high red rock, all aglow with colour in the morning sunshine against a background ablaze with the radiancy of autumn woods, and dominating the long drawn verdant vale and glistening river, remains always with me. Midway in this alluring prospect is a spot on the river still known as Danesford. Indeed, Quatford is almost certainly the Cwthbridge-on-Severn spoken of in the Saxon chronicle, where the Danes wintered in 895 before their defeat by Alfred. The much restored fourteenth-century church, but for the sentiment attached to the founding of its predecessor, of which two Norman arches in chancel and tower still survive, is disappointing. There are a few very old grave slabs, and on the wall a memorial tablet, with the most laconic inscription, for an armiger, I have ever seen in so conspicuous a position, merely this, *Joseph Corbet, gent, 1795*. One's first impression is that the less his surviving relatives said about Joseph Corbet the better, one's second and more kindly theory suggests the

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last instructions of a worthy, modest, but eccentric gentleman.

The sexton who did the honours was also ferryman, for there really are ferries below Bridgnorth, and there is one here. This local Palinurus was something of an antiquary, as befitted his other calling. He took me to the "Danish Camp" or castle on the bluff above the river, marked by some mounds in the turf, the site of a Norman castle and probably an earlier Danish fortress. I am not saying that my rustic cicerone discoursed with great precision, as we stood upon the heaving turf and looked down upon the Severn gleaming beneath a wall of radiant woodland on that glorious October morning. But he was much interested in the Danes as well as in the present inhabitants of the district whose abodes lay pleasantly upon the high slopes between us and Bridgnorth. We went down to his riverside cottage by winding woodland paths and steps cut in the red sandstone rock: a picturesque and bowery cot, meet abode for a ferryman and sexton, with a garden still showing bright patches of colour filling up the space between grove and stream. The ferry boat swung to its stake in the brisk smooth current, though whence and why the traffic was not very obvious in the seemingly pathless meadows and woody hills beyond. However, it existed evidently, and appears to be at times exacting. All Severn ferrymen have thrilling tales to tell of adventures, as one may fairly say in their case, by flood and field. For the river here, as elsewhere, gets up at times and covers everything but the hedgetops. All this he would face cheerfully, as becomes a conscientious and valiant ferryman, but the floating ice, my friend confessed, got a bit on his nerves. What most oppressed his soul, however, was the cessation of all traffic on the Severn. Fifteen years agone a dozen barges a day passed by his door, steered, no doubt, by a dozen bargees, to pass the time of day with. Now the very tow path has gone, and scarcely even a row boat, on business or pleasure, comes by to cheer him up. Just below the current swerved to the near bank and ran briskly into a

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great deep pool, over which an ancient oak spread its branches—a likely resting-place for salmon surely? Yes, there was always a salmon or two there in the running season, and as for pike!—my friend was beginning to tell pike stories when I had to take leave of him.

Quatt, a pretty little village a couple of miles distant, by a road girt about in places with groves of fine old Scotch firs, and hewn deep betimes between red sandstone walls festooned with wild ivy, is a place no one with his eyes about him would pass by. For the church, on a high knoll near the roadside, and a most attractive-looking Queen Anne house immediately adjoining it, take the eye at once: the church particularly, as the tower, nave and north aisle have been cased in brick which has mellowed into conformity during the century and a half that has since passed away. Within are many fine monuments to the inter-married Woolryche and Whitmore families, who are still seated close by at Dudmastan Hall, a large Queen Anne house in a park graced by several small lakes and much fine timber and filling the interval between the high road and the Severn. In the church are three altar tombs, one of 1689 bearing a husband (Sir Francis Woolryche) and wife, supported by the effigies of nine children, of whom only the eldest son still retains his head, while upon an upright pedestal monument near by Dame Maria Woolryche (1678) reclines in marble. Another upright tomb to Sir Thomas of the same family is interesting for the curious domestic tale it tells. For this young baronet died in 1701, aged 29, having been married at 17 to his wife, apparently of the same age. The latter we are told remained a widow for sixty-four years. So here was an old lady, who as a bride or just about to be, had witnessed the Revolution of 1688 and the last of the Stuarts with the advent of William of Orange, and yet lived to see the triumphs of Chatham's war, George III on the throne and Great Britain paramount as a world power by land and sea. What a span to have compassed between the altar and the grave! And if monumental eulogies count for anything I suspect this virtuous, tough old gentlewoman was capable of making the most of

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her advantages and peradventure entertained young Salopian warriors who had fought at Quebec or Havannah with recollections of friends who had fought at the Boyne!

The company of these silent dead, lying in the costume of their day beneath the very arches where they once worshipped, and often within sight of the very house that harboured them and the fields they trod in life, are irresistibly provocative of such retrospective philanderings. Cathedrals and the like have their greater glories and nobler monuments. But the stir of the world is always moving in or about them. Their peace is not the death-like silence that hour after hour, but for the passing beat of a bird's wing on a window or the deep suggestive boom of an old clock in the tower, broods within a country church interior. Your monuments in cathedrals and city churches—the personal side of them I mean—have altogether a different appeal. But they lack the sense of intimate local association through which the Jacobean squire and his lady, lying here aloof from the world, upon their own acres, and elsewhere forgotten, awaken in the rare visitor such a vivid sense of the past. There are a thousand, probably many more, of such quiet family companies of Tudor and Jacobean worthies scattered over the face of rural England, an eloquent testimony to the fortunate lot, in a good hour be it spoken, of this much favoured land. Of the large Queen Anne house, alluded to as adjourning the churchyard, now a private residence, there is not, I think, much to be said except that it is a very attractive specimen of that period. It has doubtless a story, but this seems to have been interrupted during the last century by its occupation as an industrial school.

Across the river and lying a little way back from it is Chelmarsh, a small village with a part-Norman church finely placed. Adjoining it is Chelmarsh Hall, the sole object of this brief digression. No guide-book nor even local handbook so much as mentions it, save merely as the residence of its owner. No writers on Shropshire, so far as one may judge, are aware of its character, nor does even the local antiquary

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seem conscious of there being anything in his line at Chelmarsh beyond a moderately interesting church. Any one standing on the lawn before the Hall front to-day would see a smallish country house of stone presenting three gable ends after the Tudor fashion, the middle block rather higher and narrower than the two wings, each block being of three storys and each story represented on this front by a single window. For a moment you would probably take it for a Tudor manor-house, re-roofed and re-juvenated by the requirements of modern life and occupation. But in less time than it takes to write this sentence you would have grasped the nature of the windows, and unless prepared beforehand, I will undertake to say, would be rubbing your eyes, provided of course that they had even an elementary perception in such things. For practically every window is ecclesiastical and of the thirteenth century or thereabouts. This indeed is no Tudor house but a monastic building of two or three centuries earlier. The upper windows in the wings are triple and quadruple trefoil-headed lancets, with diamond panes. The lower are five lancets of the same pattern. In the central block the upper window is inverted heart-shaped and composed of three cusps. The story below is lighted by a pointed window of the decorated period and the old door arch below that remains over the present entrance. In spite of the reconstruction of some of the rooms the monastic doorways survive throughout the house, while in some of the upper rooms may be seen projecting brackets from the walls, presumably for images or holy water. The basement story, now the kitchen and offices, is of massive arched stonework and partly vaulted, and a penance block is still *in situ*. An underground passage, now blocked up, ran from here to the church, a couple of hundred yards away. Monastic buildings in the shape of the remaining portions of great abbeys are of course not unfrequently extant as private dwellings. But here, independantly of any such abbey, standing apart and doing duty as a well-preserved and picturesque country house, is a small thirteenth-century monastery, to all intents and purpose intact. As a

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final word, there is in the terraced garden a yew hedge of such age and size that a summer house has been cut in it, while a very ancient mulberry stands on the lawn. A great deal more detail could of course be set down here, but these leading and essential features will be sufficient, I take it, for the reader to share my surprise that such a unique building has escaped the notice of even the antiquary, save for the bare statement that the church is Norman and was an appanage of Wigmore abbey and that there was a monastery here of some kind! Augustus Hare dismisses Chelmarsh with a two-line allusion to the church. So I see do the standard guide-books which always defer to the local antiquary. The mystery of this absent-mindedness is not for me to explain, since the present owner and occupier, Mr. Marcey, who inherited it only recently and whose forbears on the female side have held it since the Dissolution, cannot account for it: unless it be partly due to the fact that the place was for a long time in the hands of various successive tenants uninterested in such matters. There may elsewhere be detached country houses fulfilling the ordinary modern functions of such, and dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth century, showing that period all over them, but I have never for my part seen or heard of one.

The road down the river to Alvely, four miles further on, follows the high ridge on the east side of the valley and opens out beautiful views of the Clee hills which spring boldly up between the Cleobury country and the beautiful Ludlow district. Their pointed summits, between 1700 and 1800 feet above sea level, fill the western skyline, while far in our rear to the northward the Wrekin, blue and sharp, still strikes its dominating note. The woods of Dudmaston in the foreground cling to the winding river, while the three sentinel towers of Quatt, Quatford and Bridgnorth Castle stand out in line above the vale. A lane drops steeply down hereabouts to Hampton-load, on the Severn, a way station of the S.V.R.R. which follows the right bank of the river, while a rope ferry, in frequent demand, crosses the latter. A few

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cottages and an inn, standing picturesquely among orchards and woods near the river bank, form a point of attraction for holiday-makers and anglers. The river itself, again pressed closely between the hills, tumbles briskly over an uneven bottom, beneath thick fringes of willow and alder and the spreading branches of forest trees. But there were no holiday-makers on the occasion now in my mind. Even the angler, for whom the Severn is rather an autumn and winter river, was absent and losing an ideal grayling day. The landlord of the little inn tucked away behind orchards in the corner of the wood was deploring the absent-mindedness of his oft-time guests, whom apparently he packed away like herrings in a barrel when they were in keener mood. For the typical Severn angler is not an aristocrat. He doesn't demand a room to himself and a bath in the morning. He is, however, keen and skilful in the methods here required and astonishingly patient. He can tell fish stories as eloquently as his betters on the Wye or Usk. I never fished the Severn but I have held brief interviews with its devotees on many a high red bank from Shrewsbury to Worcester and never cease to admire their indomitable perseverance. The bright rain-freshened grass of the orchard, the red apples still blushing on the trees, the gold russet and saffron of the woody background, the bright gleam of the tumbling river, made a charming picture. Hampton-load was, I imagine, at its very best on that day.

Alvely stands in a commanding position and is a good-sized village with several pleasing old red sandstone houses, while its church surprised me, as I had heard nothing of it. Murray's guide-book to Shropshire, I notice, ignores both Alvely and Quatt, though quite eloquent on Quatford and not unmindful of even Hampton-load. But Alvely church is really very striking and its position no less so. It possesses a lofty battlemented tower, a mainly Perpendicular and battlemented nave, two aisles and a large Early English chancel, this last possibly a restoration. The nave is supported, however, by Norman arches on round piers terminating

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in a Perpendicular clerestory. There is, moreover, a chantry belonging to Coton Hall, containing many monuments to its owners, firstly Lees and subsequently Wakemans. There are some old frescoes, too, on the walls, while other tombs commemorate the Groves of Pool Hall, now a moated farmhouse. There is a brass with effigy to the founder not only of the last-named family but also of a school in the village, a rich London grocer, married to a daughter of Lord Jermyn, who is also buried here. Another of those thousand-and-one instances testifying to the alacrity with which the Tudor and Jacobean aristocracy allied themselves with shop-keeping and the facility with which the shopkeeper himself became an aristocrat, or at any rate the progenitor of such in the strictly English sense of the word. But what is there after all in a mere definition if this blending process has helped to make the country strong, happy, united and glorious, which it undoubtedly has? A terraced avenue of limes bounds the north side of the large churchyard, and the far-spreading view which it affords forms a fitting climax to a look at the interior of this interesting old church. It is some ten miles from Bridgnorth by the route we have here travelled. Population along it is scanty and probably much shrunken, both on lowland and upland; a pastoral and agricultural country, in short, gracious to the eye and in accord perhaps with the spirit of these pages. But the Utilitarian, who, I fear, is not likely to read them, might take heart at Alvely, as the village is supported by quarries and the like, while across the Severn the coal-men from the eastward have begun operations near Highley and built a brand-new village near the S.V. railroad.

On this particular day I worked my way down by a tortuous and disconcerting labyrinth of lanes to Arley, the show-place of the whole Severn below Shrewsbury, and meriting such fame, not merely because it has a station and a village with all opportunities for refreshment in a pretty situation. For Arley is indisputably a lovely spot and for two

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ARLEY

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or three miles below it the Severn itself makes the effort of its maturer life to remind one that it is a mountain-born stream and a salmon river. The obvious way to visit Arley, however, is by train and thence at leisure to walk down the four miles of river bank to Bewdley. The village lies on the east bank and a pleasant field path from the little station upon the farther one leads to the ferry, represented here by a substantial barge in constant demand, while a riverside hotel and several attractive red sandstone houses, amid gardens and orchards, front the water or rise on leafy terraces above it. The steep, short village street of varied and often picturesque buildings, including a charming half-timbered vicarage, climbs the hill to the church and castle, which crown all. Most of the houses and cottages at Arley let rooms to visitors, which, though unromantic in the telling, no doubt helps to create a certain pride of adornment and upkeep favourable to its general appearance. The turreted castle standing on the site of an older house and, I believe, of a still earlier Norman Castle is comparatively modern. It was erected by Lord Valentia, being the seat for some generations of the Annesleys and now for two generations of the Woodward family. The church is near by, a fine old red sandstone building girt about with limes and yew trees. Dominating the village, and with smooth green pasture land sweeping downward to the river bank, it is extremely effective in the general scheme of colour and composition which gives Arley such distinction. Like so many Severn-side views no better one of Arley can be had than from the Severn Valley railroad. The church is uncommon and has been restored at various times. The tower belongs apparently to the original Norman foundation, as the old windows indicate. The nave and chancel, however, are flat roofed and battlemented, and the two windows of the short clerestory are very curious, being each of four lancets surmounted by eight shorter and smaller lights of the same type. Within, the nave and north aisle are divided by a short arcade of pointed arches. There are several plain

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monuments to the Annesleys besides the figure of what is popularly called a Crusader. Arley, by the way, is in Staffordshire; for that county stretches out a long narrow finger, but a mile or so wide, between Salop and Worcestershire, and lays the tip of it on the river bank as if anxious to claim even this insignificant share of the Severn. The pastures that sweep so gracefully down to the water about Arley give way further up to fine woodlands which on both sides clothe its banks. Issuing from these, half a mile away, the river runs in straight smooth current between high grassy banks to the cheerful little village whose fleet of pleasure boats have ample scope up stream.

As already stated the walk along the right bank of the river to Bewdley gives an opportunity of cultivating at close quarters perhaps the best little bit of the whole river in its maturer stage; regarding it, that is, *qua* river and not merely as a feature in the valley as seen from above, in which character the Severn is generally at its best. For it is not always profitable to follow its banks on foot, and sometimes impossible. High banks when not wooded detract rather from the charm of a river at close quarters, though of no consequence in a more distant view, and when the Severn is up to the top of its banks it is not usually a season or a moment for riverside strolls! But from Arley to near Bewdley, having to force its way in part over a rocky channel, the river becomes a thing of beauty in itself, let alone the folding wood-clad hills that here dip to its fretting surface. It is now, moreover, a big river, as our English rivers go, and when it glides swiftly over gravelly shallows with a broad smooth sweep and then rushes through boulder-strewn channels into a vast swirling salmon pool, the Severn makes a noble display and one might almost fancy oneself back in Wales amid the turmoil of the Wye or Usk. In a flood this gorge must be an inspiring sight.

But when I followed them down the waters were normal and clear, running green or amber through flickering bands of shade and sunshine. The grayling were rising greedily in the

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gravelly glides, while in the rougher streams the trout in his season re-appears again for a brief space and the fly fisher in spring and summer, I am told, may be seen at work in them as you may occasionally see him in the intermittent rapids between Shrewsbury and Atcham. A flank of Wyre forest known as Sketchley wood drops down here to the right bank of the river, while on the farther side the wood of Egmore clothes the hills and dips into the troubled waters. After leaving the grassy path which leads you so pleasantly by the river side for a mile from Arley, a narrow woodland trail edges along the rapids, through what may be called the gorge, till eventually the meadows open again as Bewdley comes into view and the river sobers down into a long straight stretch where the boat or skiff once more makes its appearance. No wonder the folk of the Midland towns like to come to Arley and Bewdley. Guide-books and the like sometimes allude to these stretches of the Severn as in the Midlands. If so, there is assuredly nothing else in the Midlands in the very least like them!

The S.V.R.R. spans the river just below Arley by a lofty bridge, and towards Bewdley the Tenbury line leaps it again to run for some miles through Wyre forest, of which anon.

Bewdley is unique. There is no other place like it in England, and I am not alluding so much to its picturesque qualities, though these are considerable, but to its unusual story, the mark of which lies all over it. Now before the day of canals and railroads the trade of the Severn was one of the commercial features of the nation. It was vital to the Midlands and Border counties and affected much of Wales, and Bewdley was the great distributing and receiving centre for much of this upper traffic. Every Severn town did a more or less active river trade, but Bewdley from its exceptional position was proportionately favoured. In British and Saxon times it was probably the head of tide water, but that is of only academic interest. In after ages, when the Severn ceased to be a tangled marsh with diverse and probably changing

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channels, when, that is to say, it had become by degrees a channeled river, confined more or less to its present course, Bewdley, as now, stood at the head of its smooth readily navigable waters. The rapids we have just come through, to say nothing of those which above Bridgnorth are intermittent all up the river, did not impede all navigation as we know. For when there were neither canals nor railroads, when highways were infamous and pack horses generally used for freight, men would readily haul boats up short rapids unloading them if necessary, or even take them up empty for the downward cargoes. Still a place standing far inland that could be reached from Bristol without any of this extra toil or inconvenience naturally throve, and Bewdley throughout the Tudor and well into the Georgian period, holding this position, throve greatly and became a place of importance. Much of the iron products of the Midlands, which even in the wood-smelting days of the Tudors and Stuarts were considerable, found their way south on the Severn *via* Bewdley, while the great forests of Wyre and of Morfe adjoining the town gave of their abundance to the smelting furnaces. But iron was only an item in the produce from both east and west that descended the Severn, which from Bewdley down was improved for navigation purposes by dams and locks. Welsh flannel, cotton goods, timber, all found an outlet here, while among return cargoes groceries were an important one, being distributed from Bewdley as far north as Lancashire. Naturally, too, Bewdley manufactured on its own account, caps being for a long and important period its most conspicuous output. The famous Monmouth cap was at one time almost a monopoly of this now obscure and decadent Severn-side town.

And after all these ancient glories what is Bewdley now? It is just this that makes it so entirely, so pathetically interesting if you will, and happily so picturesque. Plenty of once busy towns in England have shrunk into mere agricultural obscurity but none known to me have in the same way dropped from such prominence to insignificance and yet pre-

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served intact the shell, as it were, which harboured their old prosperity. All activity worth serious mention has been dead here for generations. But the town itself remains very much as it was when commerce left it high and dry. On a small scale, and in a historical sense, it is a kind of English Bruges, or at any rate what Bruges was twenty years ago. Roomy old Georgian or Queen Anne houses, once the abode of wealthy merchants and now mostly put to other uses, stand near the trade-deserted river front, or in the wide quiet High Street which climbs the wood-crowned hill on whose slope the town lies, while capacious warehouses may still be seen upon the river filling some trivial requirements.

Bewdley lives to-day mainly on such earnings as a little rural market town can alone expect. Summer excursionists from the Black Country contribute something, to be sure, and probably some business men and operatives in the neighbouring towns of Kidderminster and Stourbridge have their homes here. But this has slight effect upon the normal atmosphere of peaceful resignation. It is the air of having been suddenly left stranded long years ago, and entrusted to respectable caretakers ever since which makes Bewdley a place unto itself. The romance of the once great Severn traffic is written all over it. The river now glides by forlorn terraces which long ago no doubt were wharves and by seedy-looking buildings that once were bursting warehouses, while the fine old houses behind where fine old merchants royally entertained one another and their Bristol customers or the neighbouring squires have been long ago consigned to all sorts of commonplace uses. I would not for a moment suggest that Bewdley looks depressed or takes these things to heart. Only a stray antiquary among its two or three thousands souls probably looks at it from this point of view at all. The modern burgher concerned with selling, so far as I have encountered him, merely damns it as a dead-alive place, like his prototype in a hundred other country towns. Its ancient glories are the concern only of a few patriots or

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curious visitors, and it looks sedately cheerful and resigned except perhaps when a company of over-exuberant Midlanders make high holiday in its midst and raise the temperature too high.

I have seen pictures of the old bridge at Bewdley which supported a half-timbered gate-house in the centre. The present one was built over a century ago by the inevitable Telford. It leads to the pleasant and old residential suburb of Wribbenhall, where, amid lusty trees, luxuriant gardens and orchards, many quite venerable-looking mansions stand snug and comfortable. As a hamlet it existed long before Bewdley. At the top of the broad, old-fashioned main street of the town, and planted right in the centre, is the parish church, admirably calculated to cast a gloom over even more cheerful scenes than the one it dominates. No words could convey the dourness of this Queen Anne or early Georgian church; it is indescribable. "You are going to talk about Pagan temples again," I think I hear the reader growling. Not a bit of it! No pagan would have had anything to say to this specimen. The tower is normal to be sure and might be anything, but the body is one of those high oblong barn-like structures with elongated round-headed windows that seem to mark the very abyss of church architecture. Dismal in tone and dreary of aspect beyond words it broods over Bewdley at the meeting of the three picturesque streets which practically comprise the town. This depressing fabric, however, redeems itself in some measure by possessing a fine set of bells, eight in number. They have inspired a local bard to an ode widely quoted in local prints. It begins

> I dearly love the music of those charming Bewdley bells
> It fills my mind with rapture, with joy my bosom swells.

So I presume I have put my foot in it for handling so contumeliously the edifice in which they hang. Local prose, however, contents itself as regards this last with silence, which perhaps is significant enough. I have never been inside this

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BEWDLEY

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masterpiece, and a native once strongly advised me not to go, probably from patriotic motives.

Bewdley derives its name from Beau-lieu or "Beautiful place," and Leland thought it fully justified the designation: "At the rising of the sun from the east the whole town glittereth, being all of new buildings as it were of gold". This looks as if the place experienced its first substantial boom in the early Tudor period, which is probable, as it only derived its charter from Edward IV. It is generally set down as having been in the Marches of Wales till Henry the Eighth in his great reconstruction put it into Worcestershire. Camden on beholding it girt about with the forest of Wyre broke into verse—

> Delicium rerum bellus locus undique floret
> Fronde coronatis Viriarve tempora silvæ.

As the whole of the intervening shires of Shropshire and Hereford, save some frontier fragments, had been English counties since Saxon times this is doubtless a misapprehension arising from the fact that the Court of Wales and the Marches from Ludlow sometimes sat at Bewdley as at Shrewsbury. But this was largely a High Court of Justice and four border counties were included in its jurisdiction, partly for their own convenience in thereby saving litigants the long journey to London. It was founded, however, during the Wars of the Roses, with a view to suppressing the lawlessness of the many small Palatinates, each governed or rather misgoverned by their own Marcher baron, which Henry VIII turned into new counties or included in old ones. It remained in force, though gradually losing importance, through the Stuart period till its eventual abolition.

At the top of the town and just outside it stands Ticknell House, an early Georgian edifice occupying the site of a former Royal residence in which many things happened. It was built for Prince Arthur, the elder son of Henry VII, when he was acting as titular President of Wales and the Marches at

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Ludlow Castle, the only attempt at a practical interpretation of the title borne by the heir to the English throne. It was here this same prince, who died soon afterwards, letting in thereby his egregious Bluebeard of a brother, was married by proxy to Katherine of Aragon prior to his real marriage at St. Paul's. It was at the Chapel of Ticknell that later on his dead body lay for a night on its way from Ludlow to Worcester. The weather on this melancholy occasion was so foul and the roads so deep that the royal corpse had to be dragged by oxen. Ticknell belonged to the Crown till quite recent years but is now a school. Formerly a well stocked and beautifully timbered deer park was attached to the manor-house. The original building was mostly destroyed in the Civil War, apparently between the two visits of Charles I, who on the second occasion was for this reason compelled to stop at the Angel Inn, still standing. And speaking of inns the old renown of Bewdley for cap-making is recalled by the frequency with which in this country "The Monmouth cap" occurs as a tavern sign. All up the Severn, too, in former days no bargain was regarded as properly ratified till a mug of ale had been consumed over it. The taverns were known as mug-houses and you may occasionally see to-day between Worcester and Shrewsbury "The Old Mug House" displayed over an inn door. There is also an ancient Grammar School in Bewdley, which seems to have been as prolific in turning out bishops as its rival of Bridgnorth. In the old days of river traffic the jealousy between the various towns on the Severn was acute, while the boatmen who handled the large trows and barges which carried the freight were a class to themselves, clannish and turbulent. The earlier success of Bewdley would seem to have turned its head a bit, for there were great complaints from the merchants of Gloucester and Bristol that their boats and trows going up and down the river were illegally taxed by the Bewdleyites who from their numbers and position were able to use violent means for enforcing these unwarrantable exactions.

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The forest of Wyre, which in ancient times stretched down to Bewdley and even now has left its traces in the fine trees which beautify the outskirts of the town, still covers a large area, though shorn of its woodland dignity. There is, indeed, no other forest of the same peculiar type existing to-day in England. It stretches westward from the Severn, just above Bewdley, for a matter of some five miles with hardly so great a width. It may be briefly but accurately described as a series of high rolling hills densely covered with scrub oak and almost unbroken by any open interval. On a sunny October day, as seen from the Tenbury line, which fringes it at a high level and affords perhaps the best general view of it available, the effect is extremely striking. This immense sweep of russet foliage, thinly sprinkled with the dark green of yew trees, is quite un-English, if I may be pardoned the rather fatuous epithet for once. The Forest of Dean is also a rolling tableland of oak woods, but they are all of half-grown rather carefully-tended trees with no undergrowth. This of Wyre is an entire forest of saplings, through the depths of which a little purling stream, the Downes brook, tinkles its sequestered way to the Severn. There is no thoroughfare through the forest; you must walk, and there are few trails. But a very good general view of the whole tract, as I have said, can be gathered from the Tenbury railroad, which, by the way, follows a line of great beauty throughout its whole course. Some three miles from Bewdley, up the Cleobury-Mortimer road, too, a lane cuts across the head of the forest, also affording fine views over it from other points than the railroad and some charming glimpses of its interior. In olden times, covering far wider limits than now, it was the paradise of outlaws. Even to-day it would be no easy task to recover a fugitive from its twelve or fifteen square miles of thick and almost pathless recesses. In the civil wars one Fox, a tinker, raised an irregular corps of horse, Birmingham men mostly, but further recruited from the wild characters of Wyre forest. He determined to capture Sir Thomas Lyttleton, then holding

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Bewdley for the Royalists, and effected his entry into the town one night, with a strong company of horse, by pretending at the gate that they were a squadron of Prince Rupert's command. They then killed the sentinel, captured Lyttleton in his bed, bound his officers, and got safely away with a store of plunder and horses, besides Sir Thomas himself, who was sent up to the Tower.

Following southward by the long, narrow High Street of Bewdley, where many half-timbered and Georgian houses recall the palmy days of yore, a picturesque ascent of a mile or so leads up to a green, open hill-top, beyond and beneath which lies the fine old church of Ribbesford. Embosomed as it is in swelling green hills, with the tall groves encompassing Ribbesford Hall just below, and its parklands stretching to the glistening Severn winding towards Stourport, the scene is one that justifies the ecstacies which the name of Ribbesford always arouses in the breast of a properly patriotic Bewdleyite. An avenue of sycamores leading down to the church is said to have been planted by Lord Herbert of Chirbury. At any rate, he lived for a time at Ribbesford House, which belonged, I think, to his brother; at any rate, he died in it; and, furthermore, one MS. of his famous autobiography was discovered there. The church, part Norman and part fifteenth-century, stands in a large, beautifully kept graveyard. Everything about and around the precincts has that serene, well-cherished appearance one expects from long association with a historic family or families. Here, till recently, it was the Ingrams who, with the Winningtons, have been a power in this part for centuries. As we have credited this or that Severn town with their fecundity in forgotten bishops, it would be preposterous to pass over the fact that the present Bishop of London, as the reader will doubtless have assumed, is a scion of this distinguished breed. There is much that is worth seeing, I believe, in Ribbesford church, old oak pillars and arches, and a wonderful old carved rood screen. It is a good deal visited, and it is not my fault that I have been

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unable to penetrate beyond its exterior and only beheld its single outside treasure—namely, the figure carved in relief over a Norman doorway, representing an archer rescuing a deer from a strange monster, which is the subject of many interpretations. But the key is kept at Bewdley, 1½ miles away! I have had as much experience as anyone, I fancy, in hunting for the keys of churches that parsons insist on locking up, but I do not remember any journey on this account of more than half a mile, even in cases where there was no particular call for them. This, however, was too much of a good thing, and struck me as a rather uncalled-for practical joke on the innocent pilgrim.

Ribbesford House lies on the flat beneath the hill foot amid ancient trees, whose autumnal radiancy, on this occasion, made a fine background for the burnished tints of some large copper beeches. It has a striking and stately appearance from the Severn bank, along which runs the high road from Bewdley. Over a century ago, when this branch of the Ingram family purchased it, two sides of the quadrangle, which it originally formed, were demolished. A later Lord Herbert of Chirbury is said to have committed suicide in one of its turrets fifty years before that. Opposite Ribbesford the Severn runs up against a high red cliff, known as Blackstone rock, and fringed with timber. Here is another old hermitage of the same type as the one at Bridgnorth, whose story, like that of many other Severn-side haunts, space compels me to pass over. This three miles of valley to Stourport must be accounted as another of those many reaches of the Severn that achieve a high level of beauty. Above the meadows upon the right bank, the high-wooded ridges, extending south from Wyre forest at the back of Bewdley and Ribbesford, develop into the lofty, oak-clad heights of Stagbury Hill.

Skirting their fringes the Stourport road commands ever charming views down the valley, the Severn stealing in bright winding curves by the pastures of long-memoried homesteads, which lie back from the further bank amid orchards, elms, and

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tall Lombardy poplars. The last straight reach up to Stourport bridge, for this æsthetically inoffensive town lies back on the ridge above, loses nothing in the atmosphere of boating that hangs about its pleasant banks. Indeed, for such purposes the reaches between here and Bewdley, both from a practical and scenic point of view, leave little to be desired. But the high banks of the Severn rather destroy its attraction as a boating river, save where it runs, as here, beneath hills and woods, or is raised by the very occasional weirs from Bewdley downwards. Perched on a ridge point, looking down over the river and Stourport bridge, is the hamlet of Arley Kings, with its upstanding church. It is neither the one nor the other, however, that demands any particular notice here, but the fact that Layomon was its priest in the twelfth century. And it certainly need not be accounted against the reader's intelligence if this announcement leaves him somewhat cold—to put it mildly. His works are of little historical value, as they were mainly adaptations from earlier standard authors. But Layomon was the first to write in the pure English tongue. "In 30,000 words," says Bishop Creighton, "there are not fifty Norman ones." "Historically worthless," says Green, "but as a monument of our language, beyond price." Layomon's name, strange to relate, was discovered in 1885 on the plinth of a font in the church and may now be seen there. It is worth perhaps the reminder that *Piers Plowman* (Langland) also came from this country and the banks of the Severn.

Stourport, as related, lies above the east bank of the river. It will be enough for us that it is a small market town of some 3000 souls, old in years but largely modern in construction, uninteresting but inoffensive. It is here, however, that the canalised Stour comes into the Severn, a fact of small import now, but of serious concern to Bewdley in the period before railroads. For it cut off the midland traffic from the whole Severn above this point, and dealt a sore blow to its hitherto distributing metropolis. Time and

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railroads have brought Bewdley some barren revenge. For there is no sign upon the river to-day that Stourport does any traffic with it, outside the skiffs and pleasure boats, moored to its here ornate and verdant banks.

Hartlebury Castle, the residence now and for long ages past of the Bishops of Worcester, lies about two miles from Stourport. It was given to the diocese in the ninth century by a Mercian king, and throughout the middle ages and Tudor period was a great feudal stronghold. It is approached by a noble avenue of limes planted by Bishop Stillingfleet. Portions of the wide moat which surrounded the castle are still full of water and form ornamental ponds, while the remainder is laid out in gardens. The castle had a lively time during the civil war, but was held through most of it for the King. It was ultimately surrendered by Sandys, the Governor, and with such alacrity as to create something of a scandal at the time. Originally constructed in the thirteenth century, it was then dismantled and in great part destroyed. Rebuilt soon after the Restoration by Bishop Hough, it has not been materially altered since, and exhibits to-day a long red sandstone central block with embattled parapet and two wings thrown forward. A quite recent discovery—made, in fact, by the present Bishop—goes to prove that much of the central block, including its magnificent hall, is actually part of the original castle. The oak staircases are fine specimens of their period, while one or two of the lower rooms are of noble pitch and proportions. But perhaps the most attractive apartment of all in the castle is the exquisite long gallery built by Bishop Hurd in the eighteenth century, to hold the libraries of Bishop Warburton and the poet Pope, which he acquired privately and bequeathed to the See. The portraits of famous bishops, who have helped to make history, above all when hanging as they do here upon walls that for centuries have been the home of the great See over which they ruled, have an interest, assuredly not less than those which look down on us in the portrait gallery of some illustrious

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family. Indeed, in one sense, perhaps, it is stronger, since most of these prelates have arrived at such temporal and spiritual splendour from origins far sundered and often obscure, each with his respective and individual story.

Till quite recent times his Lordship of Worcester flourished even above most bishops as a great territorial magnate. For, as in the notorious case of Durham, the possession of mineral lands produced a great and constantly growing income. Earlier, again, in the middle ages, the Bishop of Worcester, with his manors and deer forests, found his only rivals in the county as a temporal magnate in the Abbots of Evesham and Pershore. So Hartlebury, if in actual structure not more interesting than many other spacious Jacobean or Queen Anne country houses, seems to possess, in its site and environment, its old avenues, moat and fish ponds, a character of its own among the great seats of the Severn valley, and a continuity of high distinction that can be claimed by almost no other.

Worcestershire, which the Severn entered at Bewdley, has as large a share of the river as Salop. With all its great length Sabrina is the river of but four counties. Montgomery brings forth and nurtures her, and, indeed, parts with her as little more than a rather sobered mountain stream. Shropshire holds her, a mature but still at times impetuous river, in her very heart, for, speaking roughly, fifty miles. Worcester carries her, bridled by weirs into a deep and more placid current, till she meets the first hint of the tide to flow through Gloucestershire to her estuary. But it is Worcestershire that through all time has most felt the influence of the Severn. As already stated, it was here that the valley became practically impassable and divided race from race. The British Cornivi upon its east bank, so far as we know, had no part nor lot in the long struggle of the brave Silurians beyond the swampy tangled valley, up which the tide no doubt, in earlier days, unopposed by the artifical barriers of later ones, oozed and spread. The Hwiccas, that branch of the West Saxons

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STOURPORT

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which first pushed up into modern Worcestershire, held to the east bank till they became merged in the Mercian kingdom. Even in Norman times and afterwards, the forests just beyond Severn were still so dense that West Worcestershire was something of a no-man's-land. The great ecclesiastical houses of Worcester, Evesham, Pershore and Tewkesbury had drawn the bulk of the county into their then kindly grip. Even the Norman baron got but a slight hold on it. It is not the Clares, the Mortimers, the Lacys, the de Bohuns, and their like, who have imprinted their heel on every parish in most Border counties, and who meet you historically at every turn, that one chiefly encounters in Worcestershire, but abbots, priors, and bishops. Professor Freeman regarded the county for this reason as in a sense the most historically interesting in the kingdom. The great feudatories were the monastic houses. The Norman castle and the Norman baron were conspicuous by their comparative absence.

A fairly intimate acquaintance with Worcestershire fails to recall to my mind at this writing any site of a great Norman territorial stronghold, and if there be any such they may be fairly accounted as the proverbial exceptions which prove the rule. The county generally and not merely its Trans-Severn portion was more densely wooded than most others in the Norman period and its monastic houses, by good fortune and good management, averted to a great extent the land-grabbing grasp of the Conqueror, and retained their vast domains together with what one may fairly call their benign influence. Long before this, however, it was near the banks of the Severn, according to Hartlebury tradition, that St. Augustine held that famous interview with the seven Welsh bishops concerning those matters in dispute between the Latin and the British church, such as celebacy, discipline, the observance of festivals and the tonsure. Indeed, a pious and hardy faith actually points to the successor of the spreading oak under which the missionary saint from Rome actually sat. The Welshmen, complacently conscious of their long-established Christianity

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and perfectly satisfied with their domestic and un-ascetic form of it, resented the superior airs of the Latin monk and his new-fangled notions. Indeed, the discussion waxed so hot that the Welsh clerics refused even to break bread with the foreigner. Nor were matters mended when, in despair of influencing their unorthodox habits or inspiring them with any respect whatever for the Pope, Augustine urged them to at least aid him in converting the heathen Saxon on their borders—sanguinary barbarians for whose immortal souls the dispossessed Celts cared less than nothing. In short, the conference was an utter failure. Its saintly members parted not more in sorrow than in anger, but just the reverse. And it was not till Norman times that the four Welsh dioceses recognised the supremacy of Canterbury—and the fusion became gradually accepted and complete, *pace* the political tracts and distorted history of modern politicians.

From Stourport to Worcester is about twelve miles as the crow flies. The course of the Severn, now running due south, is no longer particularly tortuous, and always traverses a comparatively narrow valley, say a quarter-mile width of meadow land, bounded on either side by high hills and ridges. At Holt, about half-way down, is the only bridge, and this first portion is, I think, the most delectable of the Bewdley-to-Worcester stretch. The traveller on the highway along the western heights will not see very much of the river and from that following the eastern ridge he will see perhaps still less. On the western side, however, a maze of lanes twisting about the lower hill slopes by secluded cottages and picturesque unkempt orchards keep more or less in touch with the water-side. There are sometimes, too, pleasant grassy trails running through flat park-like pastures leading to some big house near the river bank. A charming and sequestered bit of country for a ramble on a sunny autumn morning. Thus, at least, these leafy lanes and river-side meads come back to me. Hereabouts, too, is Lincombe weir, a hundred yards long and twenty feet high, making an effective feature in a picturesque

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stretch of the river. Lower down again and for a couple of miles the famous wood of Shrawley drapes the western slope of the valley from its summit almost to the Severn's edge; famous, that is, not merely in the county as a decorative note in its landscape, but among botanists everywhere, from the fact that its undergrowth is composed throughout of an indigenous small-leaved lime tree, which incidentally is laid under periodical tribute for the crates used in the potteries.

Just above Shrawley wood, approached by a rough lane, wandering out of other lanes, is Hampshill ferry, a secluded and arcadian spot where an old red brick inn set on a patch of smooth green-sward stands up on the river bank, flanked by an orchard with willowy fringes that overhang the stream. The inn-keeper was here the ferryman. His duties in the latter capacity could hardly be arduous as only a cattle pasture leading to a hanging wood fronts the river beyond the ferry. But he had much to say of perilous adventures on swoollen floods, of big pike and of salmon, too, from the netting standpoint. Tucked away under the hill, a mile from a highway, with the gurgle and swish of the uncertain river running now low now high between its steep banks before his door, it was a lonesome spot, he admitted, in winter. It was a delightful one at any rate on that bright autumn morning. Anglers of the humbler sort stayed sometimes, he told me, at his old brick hostelry which was in itself homely enough. A rough table or two set on the green before the door and in the orchard told of other work-a-day folk, who from the busy towns far away beyond the river and its quiet valley found their way in summer time to this back-water of west Midland life.

From the high road above Shrawley wood there is a fine view westward of the hills and ridges which mark the trail of the deep-sunk and lovely valley where the Teme flows down over its gravelly bed to meet the Severn below Worcester. Abberley and Woodbury here rise conspicuous side by side above the wooded parklands of Lord Dudley's seat of Whitley. Woodbury is of note, since it marks the furthest limit of any

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invading Welsh army and so far as I know the nearest that a hostile French force has ever approached to the heart of England. As a matter of fact, French and Welsh were acting in concert, the only occasion of such a thing in history. For it was Owen Glyndwr who thus boldly dared, supported by a French army which had come to his aid and landed in Pembrokeshire. The allies lay for a week on Woodbury hill and one would like to fancy that the old British earthworks still traceable through the bracken beneath the Scotch firs upon its summit were the work of this Franco-Welsh force, as they are dubiously supposed to be. Henry IV with his army lay just opposite on Abberley hill. A special correspondent in the English camp tells us in quaint speech how the headier knights upon both sides descended into the meadow between and performed individual exploits against one another to the entertainment of the opposing armies on their respective hill tops. Glyndwr and the French, however, ran out of provisions and had to march back to Wales, falling out with one another, as might be expected, on the way. Henry followed more leisurely. He had been so often ambushed by the Welsh that it probably did not seem worth while on this occasion to run unnecessary risks.

Shrawley church stands high on the ridge above Shrawley wood in a commanding situation. With a Perpendicular Western tower, nave and chancel, it is worth inspection. For within is a Norman chancel arch, a moulded Norman doorway and three deeply-splayed Early English or late Norman windows on either side of the chancel. Among some nineteenth-century monuments to the Vernons of Hanbury Court near by is one to a lady who, dying in child birth, inspired the poet Wordsworth, a friend of the family, to twenty felicitous memorial lines thereon inscribed. There is also a Perpendicular south porch on which I remember some years ago the sexton showing me the supposititious marks of Danish arrows!

Holt, a mile below, always marks for me a sort of half-way stage on this most delectable Stourport-Worcester stretch

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of the Severn. A bridge here spans the river linking by a cross road the two highways that on the parallel ridges connect Bewdley and Worcester. A church, a modernised castle of reputed Norman origin back on the hill top west of the river, and a hotel by the bridge are practically all that there is of Holt. The hotel lying prettily in a garden is one of the few professed pleasure resorts that there are on the Severn. All this is an October country for me, though of several Octobers, as good chance has it, and a better month for the Worcestershire Severn is not on the calendar I feel sure. What scenes of revelry may here take place in the holiday months I know not. For me, a matter of selfish satisfaction no doubt, it has always been a solitude. The view up the Severn from Holt bridge on a fine autumn evening is glorious: the long trail of shiny river, with the flash of the weir in the distance, the radiant woods drooping from its western steeps, the brilliant green of the meadows below the folding hills of the valley, and beyond all the upstanding fir-crowned crest of Glyndwr's Woodbury filling in the back ground.

Holt castle and church lie together, half a mile back from the river in a fine level plateau of park-like pastures. The site of the former makes one dubious of its Norman origin. However that may be, the older part is a sixteenth-century mansion built by a Bourne, Secretary of State to Queen Mary, and purchased by the lawyer founder of the distinguished family of Bromley, passing afterwards to the Foleys. It now belongs to Lord Dudley and is occupied as a private residence. An embattled tower and some portions of the embattlemented walls survive, with additions of recent date. The church close by, girt about with fine old timber, is a beautiful building of the same red sandstone as the castle. It has a lovely Norman chancel and nave and a south chapel of the Decorated period opening into the latter, with two bays of Norman arches, a good Norman font and some old stained glass in the chapel windows. In the nave are small deeply-splayed lancet windows, while a double lancet lights the east end of the chancel. Besides several

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Bromley monuments there is a recumbent effigy in the chapel of a lady in a blue robe who has successfully defied all the antiquaries in Worcestershire to identify her. The outside of the church is in keeping with its interior. The mellow reddish grey of the sandstone walls and tower, the time-worn tiles of the nave roof, the noble elms that gird it round in this retired and peaceful spot, all make a charming picture.

Across the river and upon the opposing ridge stands the village of Ombersley, famous even in this very heart of the black-and-white country for the prevalence of half-timbered houses in its long street. If several of these suggest rather too obviously the restorer's hand, there is no occasion to cavil on that account. The Court, which is near the village, is a comparatively modern house on the edge of a well timbered park and is the seat of Lord Sandys, whose family have been here for centuries. The church is a quite ambitious modern building, the ivy-covered chancel of its predecessor standing aloof in the churchyard and still serving as a mausoleum for the House of Sandys. The latter has an interesting story. Few families in the county have been at various times more actively identified with it. Founded in the sixteenth century by a Cumbrian immigrant who became an Archbishop, his presumably vigorous northern blood seems to have influenced his descendants for several generations, culminating perhaps in Walpole's Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was raised to the peerage. As country squires in the seventeenth century they did all sorts of notable and useful things. Sir Samuel Sandys, treasurer of the Virginia Company, took a most active part in the founding of that colony, and it was he who shipped out that memorable cargo of young women who were sold by auction as wives to the planters, and paid for in tobacco! His brother George actually went out to Virginia and stayed there for some time. Endowed with both a mechanical and poetic turn of mind, he erected the first water mill upon the James river and then translated Ovid's *Metamorphoses* upon its banks. Dryden calls him "the best versifier of a former age,"

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and Drayton who was his friend thus apostrophised him with a touch of banter:—

> And worthy George by industry and use
> Lets see what lines Virginia can produce.
> Entice the muses thither to repair
> Entreat them gently to that air,
> For they from hence may thither hap to fly.

But the Indian massacre of 1622 drove George Sandys home, happily unscalped, and perhaps gave him a serious turn, for he proceeded to translate the Psalms of David into English verse, and the result, it is said, proved of great solace to King Charles' captive hours. Another Sandys made the Avon navigable by locks, while a fourth fought with conspicuous valour for the King in the civil war. These earlier Sandys lie in fine altar tombs at Wickenford, their other property in Worcestershire. It is a curious thing what a group of families which arose upon the wreck of the old nobility in the Tudor period are still here more or less *in situ* upon the Severn. There was Bromley, the famous and not over-scrupulous lawyer who bought Holt, and Sandys, son of the Archbishop who purchased Ombersley. A Vernon bought Shrawley from money made at the bar, while the Foleys and the Dudleys began as iron masters and forgers of guns and swords.

Hallow, which rises with some distinction on the right bank of the river between Holt and Worcester, is the only place which calls for any particular mention at the close of this chapter. And Hallow, save for the Hall in whose predecessor Queen Elizabeth was entertained and shot two bucks in the park and no doubt "swore her favourite oaths," is much modernised. Her Majesty, while thus enjoying the hospitality of the Habingtons of Hindlip, who then owned the manor, had brought a trifle of 1500 horses with her which were pastured at Pitchcroft on the river above Worcester. People are apt to be sceptical regarding the many houses in which the great Eliza slept. For myself, I believe in all of them. Her progresses, and she made many of them, were not things

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to be forgotten by her entertainers or their neighbours or their descendants.

On the left bank near this point the Severn receives both a canal from Birmingham and the sluggish river Salwarpe. There is another weir, too, near Hallow, and just above it Bevere island, notable in Worcester history as a place to which the townsfolk retired during one of the Danish sieges and massacres, and there successfully defended themselves.

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CHAPTER X

WORCESTER

THE city of Worcester, the largest of the Severn towns, stands up boldly on a high ridge above the river's eastern bank. And, fortunately, that portion of it which is most worthy of such distinction, is also the most conspicuous, namely, the Cathedral and its precincts. For Worcester, though it has riverwards more pride of pose than Shrewsbury, is not merely a clean old market town like the latter, which can at most angles confront the critical eye of the approaching visitor with confidence and an undisfigured face, but, as every one knows, it is the seat of many industries, of which gloves and china are those best known to the world. But, despite unlovely factories, with the modern streets and suburbs contingent on them which comprise the more back-lying parts of the city, Old Worcester, historic Worcester, lies fairly compact and undefiled, within limitations that a little familiarity soon make apparent. Old Worcester, then—applying that term to the southern and higher part of the ridge, which carries the Cathedral and all connected with it, and the principal streets of the town—is still full of old world suggestion. The streets are also full of bustle, but it is the comfortable well-dressed bustle that distinguishes even Shrewsbury on most days in the week—that of a county capital rather than a manufacturing town, with a strong whiff of cathedral atmosphere thrown in.

Pre-Saxon Worcester is very shadowy. As an important ford over the Severn, a small Roman station, known as Caer Guarangum, stood here, and a secondary Roman road, following an old British trackway, the Upper Salway (Salt-way),

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element, though most of the monasteries, save Worcester, were more or less cleared of Saxon monks. Still, the character of the county, unlike that of others, remained ecclesiastical rather than military, and, furthermore, the influence of so many powerful abbots tended to a constant increase of Church territory. The peasants who tilled the lands along the Severn, being mainly outside the feuds of Border barons, or those, again, of the equally restless earls to the east of them, had, no doubt, much to be thankful for. For any lack of drum and trumpet history, however, attaching to Worcester and its county in the middle ages, both made ample amends in the civil war, when they became a very cockpit of strife, of which anon.

The Cathedral was almost entirely rebuilt on a still more splendid scale in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Two destructive fires had sadly damaged Wulfstan's church, but small portions of it still remain, notably the crypt, one of the most beautiful in England. The present Cathedral, in all essentials, represents the building commenced about 1218, and dedicated, amid great pomp, in the presence of Henry III by Bishop Sylvester. The choir and Lady chapel are the earliest portions and in the style of the period. The nave, however, contains both Decorated and Perpendicular work, though the two westernmost bays are transitional Norman. The cloisters are Perpendicular, and are peculiarly rich in ornamentation, and are further enhanced by the warm red colouring of the stone. The latest addition to the Cathedral is a beautiful little Tudor chantry, to the memory of Prince Arthur, on the south side of the choir, which contains his tomb. A great deal of restoration was done, however, by Sir Gilbert Scott and completed in 1874, portions of the fabric being almost rebuilt. Of the monastery itself, there are considerable remains. The chapter house is still perfect, the lower part being Norman, and the upper fifteenth-century. The refectory, of Norman foundation, but Perpendicular in fabric, is a noble building and very much in evidence, being used as the school-room of the Cathedral school. Then,

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again, in the Canon's garden, and now thickly draped in foliage, are the ruins of the fourteenth-century Guesten Hall, which was deliberately destroyed in the last century as interfering with the view of the Cathedral! The tracery of some of its spacious windows still defies time and weather.

The exterior of Worcester Cathedral, with the exception of the tower, is extremely plain, the interior just the reverse. Its chief attraction lies in the exquisite blending of so many styles into one harmonious whole. Other points generally selected for special notice are the Perpendicular work on the chancel walls similiar to that at Gloucester, the unusual height of the Lady chapel, the beautiful pillars of the crypt and the Norman work of the chapter house. Then, too, the site is altogether felicitous and its accessories harmonious. For the Deanery, one or two Canon's houses, the Cathedral itself with its close, and the Cathedral school form a frontal line, as it were, along the ridge with leafy gardens and lawns sloping down to the Severn. Nor must the massive Edgar tower which leads into the close by any means be overlooked; an ornate castellated gateway of the thirteenth century that led originally into the monastery and to the castle, every trace of which last has been long swept away. The archway is now a much used thoroughfare, opening into the large square with the Cathedral on the one side, the school with various eccesiastically concerned buildings on the other, a fine grove of elms in the centre, and the river running below the west and open side. The King's Cathedral school is more vigorous and flourishing than most of its type, having, I think, nearly 200 boys and all the equipment of a public school. The King's scholars in their surplices are a time-honoured feature of the Cathedral services, and being in evidence at all times in the Cathedral neighbourhood give that flavour of youth which, attached to historic buildings, is a pleasant note in the social atmosphere. Many of us quite unconnected with Worcester might peradventure have a soft spot for this old school. For who among the

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elder at any rate, has not, at that period when impressions are fresh and memory tenacious, been absorbed in the simple joys and sorrows of the Channings or sympathised with Mrs. Haliburton in her troubles, and been tempted even to a further interest in Roland Yorke? I admit without a blush that I read all three of these books again not many years ago with pleasure, and I almost think as regards the first two, I could repeat the achievement to-morrow. I never pass under the Edgar tower without half expecting to meet one or the other of these artless but rather endearing creations of Mrs. Henry Wood, dashing home (they always "dashed") with his book under his arm and in contrite or triumphant mood. The authoress was a native and resident of Worcester. She knew her stage, which is much, and, though in simple setting, she drew the middle class life and the social subtleties of a Cathedral town sixty years ago admirably and without effort merely because she was herself of it. The better born grammar school boy of that day, too, from a home-boarder point of view, awakens one's interest. He is a vanished feature of English society. For the modernised Cathedral school or any like it to which he would now resort is virtually a public school in miniature, while to those unreformed he would not go at all. The old-fashioned school and its like such as the Channings and Roland Yorke and their type attended was not in the least like a modern public school and consequently lent itself so very much more readily to the domestic drama of the Victorian age. Trollope with a touch of genius has written the social history of his day for all time. Mrs. Henry Wood without anything of the kind has unconsciously contributed her mite. A memorial tablet has been recently put up to her in the Cathedral, and it was high time.

The last time I was in the old empty chambers of the Edgar tower, one of them was almost knee deep in masses of ancient documents relating to the city that had recently been unearthed and deposited here in cartloads. They were then in process of examination by an expert, a work expected to

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last two or three years, for many or most of them from age or ill-treatment were almost illegible, and hundreds were otherwise valueless. I was shown one ragged scrap which was in truth a message from Edward I to the Mayor warning him to be on the look out for the Welsh. The Rolls of the great monastery, in a state of chaos till a few years ago, have now been deciphered and transcribed by the labours of Canon Wilson. It was Florence, the monk of Worcester, to whom historians are indebted for the "English Chronicle" translated by him in the twelfth century.

Most of the old monuments and stained windows in the Cathedral were destroyed by the Commonwealth men. The two principal ones, however, the chantry tomb of Prince Arthur and the altar tomb of King John in the very centre of the choir, close to the altar rails, happily survive. It is difficult to avoid a passing thought, as one stands by the Prince's splendid tomb, how different the course of history might have been had the energies of Henry VIII been confined to the modest career of a younger son. The monks of Worcester would have sung their requiem for the dead prince in tones of lamentation much more poignant than those demanded by even an excess of conventional grief had they known what the passing of that young life meant for them and their church! On the top of John's tomb is an effigy of the interred King himself and on either side of it the small figures of St. Oswald and St. Wulfstan respectively. The incongruity of such association seems almost sacrilegious. But perhaps the most disreputable though very far from the stupidest of English Kings insisted upon it. His belief in Wulfstan particularly as intercessor for his future weal was quite pathetic. "Time has destroyed," says Freeman, "the tombs of the saints but has left that of the wicked King." And this one so conspicuous in the choir of Worcester Cathedral has had such shriving as seven centuries of prayer and praise may give to the least worthy, so far as we may judge, of English monarchs. His remains were examined at

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the restoration in 1874. Some grey hairs remained on his head and enough of his burial robes to show that they conformed with those on his effigy. It was at this time, when John conferred, as it was then regarded, the favour of depositing his unworthy bones with the monks of Worcester, that they acquired part of the Castle, the remainder only being left as a fortress.

Among the pageants that Worcester Cathedral has witnessed in olden days was that one when Henry II and his Queen in a spasmodic fit of humility laid their crowns upon the altar and vowed never to place them on their heads again. But to my thinking the most pathetically romantic of all these was the wedding of Llewelyn ap Griffith, that last, ill-fated Prince of Wales, in 1278. This was a splendid ceremony and a strange presage to the ghastly climax of four years later. For King Edward was here with all his court and the King of Scotland as a guest, to grace the union, while the Church mustered in force to bless it. Lady Elina, daughter of the dead Simon de Montfort, was the bride. The Prince had met this lady on a visit to her father at Kenilworth and lost his heart to her. She was then the daughter and heiress of the most powerful magnate in England, but now only a penniless outlaw. She had been captured at sea on her way to marry Llewelyn and held by Edward as a weapon for compassing the submission of the rebellious Prince, who was then braving his arms. To the chagrin of some of his chiefs Llewelyn succumbed to his passion for the fair Elina. And then all went happily even to the marriage bells, as related. The pair were despatched with acclamations and the Royal blessing to, as was supposed, submissive Wales; he as mere "Lord of Snowdon," otherwise of Anglesea and Carnarvonshire, by the terms of his new bargain—to such a pass had Welsh nationality been reduced! It may, or may not be, that Llewelyn sacrificed his patriotism to his passion, but some of his friends in Wales thought he did. In any case he nobly atoned for it as we all know, not assuredly hindered

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therefrom by the early death in child-birth of his young wife.

There is a fine set of chimes in the Cathedral tower, a carillon, in short, which flings some forty different melodies during the week over the town and Severn valley. Old British airs may be dying out in some places but the citizens of Worcester most assuredly will not be allowed to forget them. The Deanery, with an early Georgian front erected by Bishop Hough, and very old back portions looking down over the river, was formerly the bishop's palace, Hartlebury being his country seat. Certain portions of the house and the cellars are thirteenth and fourteenth century. The present drawing-room, with an Early English door and large main window of the same period, is perhaps unsurpassed in any ecclesiastical residence in the country. George III stayed here on a visit to the city in 1788. The long central artery of Worcester, running from the Cathedral along the town ridge and represented by High Street and Foregate, though smartened up to the needs of a busy modern town, retains several fine old houses of the Queen Anne and early Georgian period. Of the former the Guildhall is a noteworthy specimen. Most of the half-timbered houses in which Worcester is still fairly rich lie in the quiet side streets, to the right or left of this busy but cheerful thoroughfare.

In Sidbury, just below and east of the Cathedral, where one of the old Gates of the city formerly stood, is the Commandery, accessible to all visitors for a trifling payment. It seems to have been a small collegiate house founded by St. Wulfstan and contains some work of that period. Added to and altered at various dates, it became after the Dissolution the property and residence of a rich clothier, whose family owned it for several generations, and it contains many interesting features suggestive of the changing centuries. It was here that the Duke of Hamilton, the leader of the vanquished Scots at the second battle of Worcester, died of his wounds. In the old corn market is a quaint little half-timbered house with the

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inscription *Love God, honour the King* over the doorway. It has well qualified for this particular motto by having been the lodging of Charles II at the last battle of Worcester and still more as the scene of the narrowest of all the narrow escapes experienced by that much-hunted prince. After fighting bravely at the Sidbury Gate he got back here amid the confusion of the inrushing Parliamentary troops and was hurried out of the back door by Wilmot at the very moment the soldiers entered by the front. At any rate, it was from this house that he began the long series of adventures which ended, as we know, on the deck of a channel fishing boat. Academic peace and the conscious dignity of centuries reign, to be sure, within the shadow of the Cathedral—but outside it the old timbered houses which frequently confront one in back streets do not seem quite so happy as those in the more congenial atmosphere of Shrewsbury, Bewdley or Bridgnorth.

The properly constituted visitor to Worcester duly inspects the glove and porcelain factories, where he finds a ready welcome, and to such we will leave him. Worcester, like many other towns of the west and south-west, was a great wool mart in the middle ages, being handy to the Cotswolds, and did a thriving cloth trade in the reign of Edward III. It is said to have eventually lost much of that trade by giving short measure! The commerce of the Severn, particularly after the rise of Bristol, was another great asset to the city. In later days, when the wool trade went north, Worcester was not left stranded like the Wiltshire and Gloucestershire towns in the Cotswolds, or on the other side of them. For owing to the neighbourhood of the coal and iron fields and the waterway of the Severn, it took up with other things and continued to flourish. Nor must one forget that it is also a great agricultural market and does a big trade in hops, which, I hope it is not necessary to add, are grown very largely in the shires of Worcester and Hereford.

Most of the churches in Worcester are modern buildings, if not modern foundations. All-Saints', much damaged

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during the civil wars, fell into the hands of the early Georgians, who took much trouble with it after their peculiar manner. A chained Bible, however, survives from its earlier period. The little church of St. Alban's in Fish Street, an old-fashioned quarter, boasts a Saxon foundation and, though largely rebuilt, has still a little Norman work left in it. St. Andrew's is mainly of late fifteenth-century, in no wise remarkable, save for its beautiful tapering spire, some 250 feet high, which is one of the features of the city from far and near.

The northern half of Worcester is not attractive, but deplorably the reverse, though busy and useful. It lies well back from the river, however, and does not materially encroach upon its shores. The stranger, for instance, descending at Shrub-hill station, which he probably would do, if sensitive in such matters, would feel perhaps a little downhearted till he drew near the Cross, when he would begin to readjust his impressions. And when he began to know Worcester, and the points of view from which to regard it, he would find, I think, that it grew upon him.

The climate is not exhilarating, nor indeed is that of Shrewsbury. Bridgnorth alone, of Severn towns, is free from all reproach in that direction. Probably the fact of being perched up so high on its huge mass of porous sandstone rock accounts for its more invigorating qualities. It is a trite saying, and with much truth in it, that most of the picturesque portions of England are relaxing, and most of the ugly ones bracing. This would seem in strict accordance with the laws of compensation. How the east coast of England, from Kent to Lincolnshire, strikes a Welshman or a Northerner would naturally, I presume, be incomprehensible to an East Anglian, in whom a few glades of heather, a pine wood, a field full of poppies, or a mud cliff 200 feet high, inspires betimes a rapture that speaks for itself; and no one would begrudge such mild compensations to the possessors of so invigorating a climate. But even in the west or the north-west high and

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mountainous hills, besides being abiding things of beauty, afford ready escape from the humid languor of the vales.

And speaking of hills, one undeniable claim of Worcester is the really glorious view of the Malverns, only seven or eight miles away. For their modest height of twelve to fifteen hundred feet there is no chain of hills in Great Britain approaching them in distinction of outline. From a distance and from any and every side they are for all spectacular purposes mountains, and under certain quite frequent atmospheric conditions, their actual stature becomes almost a thing of might. They might be some fragment of a Welsh mountain range which had wandered incontinently to the verge of the Midlands. They dominate the Severn valley from Worcester to Tewkesbury and infinitely ennoble it. Their summits catch the first beams of the rising sun and darken against the crimson sunsets. Slightly to the south of west from Worcester itself, they group themselves, I think, into as sharp outlines as from any point. Like most people, probably, who only knew them by name, I once harboured vague impressions that the Malverns were as the South Downs, the Chilterns, or the Cotswolds, which last in a manner confront them. More years ago than I care to remember, my first sight of them was from a bedroom window, close to the Cathedral, on a winter morning. They were white with snow and I was properly astonished. But we shall meet them again, no doubt, and at closer quarters, in the next chapter.

In the past of Worcester the civil war looms as by far the most dominating event. The domestic wars of the middle ages—mainly, for reasons that the reader will, I trust, have already gathered from the text—affected neither town nor country to anything like the extent it ravaged others. It has the distinction, to be sure, of being the only city away from the Welsh Border that was ever seriously threatened by a Welsh army. And that was on the occasion alluded to in the last chapter when Glyndwr, with his French allies, penetrated to Worcester, but returned to Woodbury-hill on the appear-

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ance of Henry IV and his men. But into the few years of strife between King and Parliament half the stirring events of the city's long life were crowded. It was the capital of a pivotal country between the Royalist Border counties and Royalist Wales on the one hand, and the Parliament regions of the Midlands and the East on the other. It lay on the lines of communication between a leading source of the King's strength and his headquarters at Oxford, for the Severn valley was vital to the King. Worcestershire, too, was almost the only county that could manufacture arms, thanks to the iron districts and Dudley which had long been accustomed to forge them. For cannon were made at the latter and shot at Stourbridge, while pikes and swords came from the many small forges in the north of the county. The Birmingham swordmakers greatly exasperated Charles by refusing to sell him their products. Lastly, the salt pits at Droitwich were indispensable. The first skirmish of the war was fought outside the gates of Worcester; the last battle, which finally extinguished the Royal cause, was also fought here.

The city itself was by no means unanimous for the King at the outbreak of war, but most of the country gentry were Royalists, and the strong places of the county were victualled and garrisoned in the King's interest. Worcester was also particularly important for its bridge over the Severn. One at Bewdley, twenty miles north, and another at Upton, ten miles south, were next to this the nearest available. At the opening of the war the King, with Rupert beside him, marched from Nottingham to Shrewsbury to muster the Royalist strength of the west. Worcester, though not very zealous, and with its fortifications in disrepair and its walls dilapidated, was, nevertheless, garrisoned for Charles. Essex at this time was edging along just south of the King, so as to keep him away from London, and, if possible, to cut off his reinforcements from Wales. Byron, with a dragoon regiment presented to the King by the Earl of Worcester, who spent first and last a

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fabulous sum in the Royal service, was only just in front of Essex, with a load of plate collected in Oxford and destined for the mint at Shrewsbury. Pushing his way over the Cotswolds, and harassed by the country people who, in the west Midlands, when free to declare themselves, seem generally to have been hostile to the King, his position would have been precarious enough before a nimble pursuer, but was, in any case, critical. An express to Shrewsbury, however, brought Rupert to the rescue, and the invaluable convoy reached Worcester safely.

On 22nd September, Essex was at Pershore, and Nathaniel Fiennes, a captain of more initiative than determination, made a surprise attack in the night on Worcester by the Sidbury gate, which ended in a bloodless failure. To cut off Byron and his treasure from Shrewsbury seemed imperative. So Colonel Sandys (of Kent) crossed the Severn by the bridge at Upton ten miles below, marched up the west bank, crossed the Teme at Powick bridge, two miles from Worcester, and blocked the road to Shrewsbury. Rupert and his horsemen, suspecting some such movement, were resting, dismounted in a field, on the city side of Powick bridge. Owing to obstructing foliage, Sandys and his men were across the narrow stone bridge, which is still standing, before either was aware of the other's presence. Rupert's dashing qualities showed themselves at this the very first blow struck in the war. For, calling on his brother, with Lord Byron, Digby, Wilmot, and a few others near him, he leaped on his horse, and with this handful of distinguished cavaliers, leaving the troopers to follow as best they could, he drove straight at the head of Sandys' column. Staggered by the first rush of this handful of expert swordsmen, and without time to recover, then struck again by the second wave of supporting troopers, the raw, unhandy Parliamentarian horse were driven headlong back across Powick bridge and over the flat meadow beyond, with considerable slaughter. At the picturesque village of Powick, on the low ridge beyond, Rupert, for once in his life, drew

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rein. The panic-stricken Commonwealth men did not draw theirs till they reached Upton, where they gave such an account of the irresistible prowess of the cavalier horsemen, that its echoes reached London and greatly impeded the efforts of the recruiting sergeants. "It rendered Rupert's name," says Clarendon, "very terrible in so much as they had not in a long time after any confidence in their horse." Some of the fugitives, he says, were so much impressed, that they threw up the service and went home.

Worcester, however, was then incapable of defence against the army of Essex, who proceeded to occupy it, and to treat the unfortunate city with no little severity. He fined and imprisoned the Mayor and Aldermen for submitting to the King, and replenished his own war chest with a ton of the citizens' plate. It was Essex too—not Cromwell, who had not yet, of course, emerged from obscurity—a nobleman of rank and comparatively blameless memory, who let loose his soldiers upon the churches, and above all, upon the Cathedral, which was literally looted. The organ and stained glass windows were destroyed and tombs and effigies mutilated, while rude soldiers, clad in the sacred vestments, capered about the streets. The cider and perry of Worcester, says one of them in a letter home, delighted the London soldiers, and partly accounted, perhaps, for their sacrilegious orgies. But otherwise, to these frenzied souls, the city resembled "Sodom and Gomorrah, while its people perished for the word of God". This last deficiency, at any rate, was made good by Essex, for every pulpit in the city was occupied by military tub-thumpers. Fanaticism ran so high that the hapless Sandys, writhing in agony with his wounds, was driven raving mad before his release by a theological contest waged by two hair-splitting Calvinistic divines over his dying bed. Both armies, a month later, swerving away eastward, met at Edge hill, and Worcester was again held for the King.

The new Governor was Sir William Russell of Strensham Castle, near to where the Avon joins the Severn. There is

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nothing now left of the castle itself, which was stoutly defended in the war, but some mounds and a briery moat. But more enduring monuments of the Russells are some of the finest brasses in England and many noble marble effigies in the sequestered church of Strensham, which from a woody ridge overlooks the lowest and perhaps the loveliest reach of Shakespeare's Avon. Colonel Washington, too, an active Royalist and collateral ancestor of the immortal Virginian, was much in and about Worcester during this period. But, though for so long in Royalist hands as to earn the title of "the ever-faithful city," the honour was hardly won, and the privilege by no means free from alloy. For many of the Cavaliers were mere arrogant soldiers of fortune. It is told of one of them, a certain Captain Hide, that, on dining with the Mayor at the New Year, and finding no gift under his napkin, he roundly abused His Worship, and being remonstrated with for offering an impertinence to his hostess, threw a plate at the Mayor's head. Both armies taxed and plundered in the Severn valley. Bridgnorth and Gloucester were captured and held by the Parliament while Worcester remained with the King. Parliament enjoined one thing and the King another, the country people being ground between the upper and nether millstones of the rival factions.

In the spring of 1643, there was a great deal of fighting in the Severn valley. Waller now came on the scene with his able Lieutenant Massey, opposed to the Princes Rupert and Maurice. A raw army of Welsh Royalists was cut to pieces at Highnam, near the Severn at Gloucester, and a monument upon the spot tells the rather pathetic tale. Waller, however, was soon afterwards beaten at Ripple, just below Worcester. Worcester itself was besieged by Waller in June, Colonel Sandys of Ombersley being then the Governor. The walls had been rebuilt, and the fortifications repaired, but there were only 1500 men to defend them against double that number of the enemy. A trumpeter was sent to the Sidbury gate to demand surrender. Sandys curtly told him he "was not at

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Hereford," alluding to a too ready capitulation there. The envoy, rejecting the answer as insolent, was shot. After an artillery duel, Waller attacked at the Friary gate, but was repulsed with loss, while a sortie from St. Mark's gate drove back the besiegers. Eventually, at the approach of Prince Maurice, Waller retired, having lost 170 men, and taking his wounded down the Severn in barges. After this, 400 of the women of Worcester worked daily on the fortifications, against the possible return of Waller. But Waller did not return, for he was crushed a month later at Roundawaydown, above Devizes.

Gloucester was now the only Severn valley town in Parliament hands and sustained its memorable siege under Massey, till relieved by the rapid march of Essex from London. The King himself was much in the Worcester country throughout this autumn, till his attempt to cut off Lord Essex from London resulted in the first battle of Newbury. It would be futile even to touch on all the skirmishes, battles, and sieges that took place in and about the Severn valley during the years '43 and '44. We are mainly concerned, for the moment, with the city of Worcester, which through all the vicissitudes of its neighbourhood remained in Royalist hands. Exacting occupants though the Cavaliers were, it was better perhaps to be bled consistently by one party than by both, like the country districts and the neighbouring towns which constantly changed hands.

In June, 1644, Charles with 6000 men was pushed back by Waller to Worcester. He stayed for a week at the Bishop's palace (the present Deanery) and screwed another £1000 out of the unfortunate citizens. It was then that he marched up the river to Bewdley, staying at Ticknell House, and there, as previously mentioned, he wrote the fateful letter to Rupert which resulted in the battle of Marston Moor. Waller following him to Stourbridge, the King fell back again to Worcester, and so to Evesham. He was in the city on three or four further occasions during the war, but never, I think, for more

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than a day or so. Poor man, he was usually too hard pressed! But of the many pictures of Worcester through these stirring weeks and months of war, that have been preserved to us from this momentous time, intimate and instructive as they mostly are, there is unfortunately no space here. It is the second siege—the first already described was a small affair—at the close of the year 1646 and its third one, five years later, in the second war, as it is sometimes called, that are the greatest of its martial memories.

By May, 1646, the King was in the hands of the Scots and his cause hopeless. Worcester, its neighbourhood bled literally white by three armies—for the Scots had recently passed through it *en route* for Hereford—still held out. Colonel Washington was in command and had raided what was left in the ravaged country, hauled 1000 loads of firing from Shrawley wood and destroyed all the houses without the walls that might give cover to the enemy who now sat down before it under the command of Whalley. A constant artillery fire was maintained on the city, while the garrison delivered an occasional sally. Urgent demands for the abandonment of useless sacrifice for an already lost cause were put forward. The women were insistent and even the soldiers were growing insubordinate. Washington, however, was inflexible and ejected 1500 useless people. When the news came of the fall of Oxford, a council of war was held in the Bishop's palace. Washington wanted to fight to the last, but he was over-ruled. A parley was then held in which four Parliamentarian squires of the county represented the besiegers, to wit, Dinely, Lygon, Rose and Lechmere, but no agreement could be reached and the siege continued for another month. A sort of desperation now took hold of the defenders, with the resolve that as Worcester had been the first city to fight for the King so it should be the last. A week later, however, powder and provisions failing, terms were offered with a general pardon, excluding only Sir William Russell. His comrades, however, swore they would die on the walls rather than this. But the

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valiant Russell hushed their protests. He had only one life to lose, he declared, and could not lose it in a better cause.

On 23rd July the last Anglican service for fourteen years was held in the Cathedral and the formal surrender of the city was carried out on Rainbow hill. These remaining Worcestershire Cavaliers now received their written passes of safety to their respective homes; Littleton, Townshend, Sheldon, Sandys of Ombersley, Habingdon of Hindlip, a Bromley, an Acton, an Ingram, a Walsh of Abberley and the two Berkeleys of Spetchley and Cotheridge respectively. An oath was required of them not again to bear arms against the Parliament, a fact apparently forgotten when the old Cavaliers are reproached for not supporting the movement of 1651. This last occasion was fortuitously much the more famous one for the name of the city, though not concerned as were the others with its own doughty deeds. It was five years and a month after the scene just described that another Royalist army entered Worcester and threw England into a ferment.

Prince Charles having swallowed Presbyterianism with his tongue in his cheek had been crowned king of Scotland, and with 16,000 men, mostly Scots, for Englishmen had proved shy, sat down in the heart of his father's ancient battle-ground. The Duke of Hamilton, his general-in-chief, was all for a direct march on the capital. Charles, however, true to the family tradition, saw hope enthroned upon the hills of the March counties and the mountains of Wales. But even the squires of the Severn valley with few exceptions would not come out this time. They had settled with the sequestrators, paid or were trying to pay their redemption fines and had restored their damaged houses. The Royal army was mainly Scottish and Presbyterian. They hated Presbyterians and regarded the Scots as the betrayers of the late King. Moreover, the counties of Worcester and Hereford had been eaten bare by Leven's Scottish army, which had come to assist the Parliament in the late war, and the remembrance rankled. Finally there was their oath. Discontent and no doubt vague talk of

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future action had gone forward in a country so full of Catholic families as this one. But when Charles, having been crowned King in the Guildhall, set up his standard on Pitchcroft by the Severn above the city, and summoned all men of the county between 16 and 60 to rally to it, mighty few accepted such a precarious invitation.

A mere handful of gentlemen with a few hundred ill-armed countrymen responded to the call. Renewed appeals fell utterly flat. That fine old Parliamentary soldier Massey, their most effective general in these counties during the last war, was now of all men with Charles, but much had happened in the five years' interval. The Scots were rather despondent, as well they may have been, for they had marched 300 miles and gathered up but few recruits. A rising in Lancashire and Cheshire had already been crushed. Moreover, the sermon preached before Charles in Worcester Cathedral deeply offended the Scots by the exuberance of its Divine right and non-resistance utterances. Yet once more, and this time with much ill-will, the Worcester folk were set to work upon their own defences. The walls were renewed and a star-shaped work cast up on the ridge now climbed by the London road, still known as Fort Royal. The traces are readily discernible in the grounds of a private house which now covers the site. Half the Scots were kept in the town for the defence of its works and the remainder sent across the bridge to hold the angle between the Teme and the Severn. Two piers of Powick bridge on the first-named river, where the first blood of the war, it will be remembered, was shed, and that gave access to the Severn bridge at Worcester, were destroyed.

By this time, 27th August, Cromwell had reached Evesham with 28,000 men, part regulars and the rest chiefly East Anglian militia. Fleetwood was second in command and the army at once moved on Worcester. The Severn had to be crossed by a sufficient body to crush the Scots on its west bank or drive them over the bridge into the city. For this the bridge at Upton, ten miles below, offered the only opportunity, and

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Lambert with a sufficient force was sent forward to seize it. But it had been already broken on the west side by Massey, who himself with 300 Scots held it as an outpost. A fine feat of arms was now performed here. A single narrow plank had been accidentally left by the workmen across each gap of the broken bridge, which last was raised high above the deep river. At daybreak of the 29th eighteen picked men were ordered by Lambert, Massey's outpost being caught asleep or off guard, to straddle the planks as best they could, rush the village, seize the church and hold it till reinforcements could join them. The little company carried out the daring programme to the letter, but the enemy managed to upset the friendly planks behind them and for half an hour the eighteen had to hold the church, though it was in flames, against Massey's whole force. Eventually, after hunting for a ford, a makeshift for one was found and Fleetwood's dragoons half scrambled through and half swam the river, seized the bridge and replacing the planks let over a sufficient force to drive the Scots towards Worcester, sorely wounding in the process the gallant turncoat Massey. Cromwell rode over himself from Evesham to congratulate his captains. Fleetwood, having now made Upton bridge passable, crossed it with 12,000 men, and marched up the west bank towards Worcester, while Cromwell, having collected every boat he could lay hands on as far down as Gloucester, bridged the Severn below the junction of the Teme, thus establishing communications between Fleetwood, now confronting the enemy in the meadows across the river from the city, and the rest of the force. With this latter he projected an assault on Worcester itself under his own leadership. Planting his artillery on Red hill and Perrywood to the south-east of the city he began a bombardment, and soon afterwards sustained and repelled a night attack of the garrison on his position.

On 31st September, the anniversary of Dunbar, all was ready and the final battle began early in the morning. Dean attacked the Scots at Powick and there was a stubborn fight

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in the village, while Lambert crossed the Teme near its mouth by a short bridge of boats and attacked Pittscottie's Highlanders, the first ever seen in the South of England. They had received orders to fight to the last and were obeying this so literally that Cromwell, who had a view of the field from his high post across the river, grew anxious and led over three brigades at some risk to his own position. The Highlanders were now driven in rout up the west bank of the Severn and great numbers were killed on or about what is now the county cricket ground. Their still unbeaten comrades at Powick village, on seeing the state of affairs which involved a danger of being cut off from the city bridge, fell back fighting to meet the routed Highlanders at that point. Cromwell now saw that he could leave Lambert to deal with these over-river forces, which he did effectively. Charles in the meantime, had been watching the battle from the Cathedral tower. On seeing Cromwell cross the river he had mounted his horse and galloped to Powick, urging the necessity of a desperate stand. Two thousand Scottish cavalry under Leslie, were stationed at Pitchford, above the town but within sight of the bridge. For some reason nothing Leslie could say would induce them to move, and as a matter of fact, they did not strike a blow in the battle.

Cromwell, in the meantime, was back with his men and batteries at the east and south of the city, for another courageous attack on his lines had practically succeeded. He was not a moment too soon, his raw militia having been driven helter-skelter back and some of their guns taken. As Cromwell came on the scene it was a question whether they would break and fly. But now the great Commander, the unbeaten leader in so many fights in the three kingdoms, threw his whole strength against Fort Royal. The Roundhead militia of Essex and Suffolk, fired by Cromwell's presence, and with fresh spirit, the man of Belial himself, who behaved by the way most gallantly, and his mixed array of Amalekites in front of them, the matchless regulars of Cromwell at their side,

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beat their way with clubbed muskets over the ramparts. The fort was carried and its guns turned on the city, rising up but a short half-mile away across a narrow valley. This finished the business in a wild stampede of Scottish infantry down to and through the Sidbury gate, closely followed by the charging squadrons of Cromwell's horse. A very different stamp of trooper from those whom Rupert had driven panic-stricken from Powick bridge nine years before! Charles himself, as he entered the barrier, was only saved from a sword-thrust by a friendly arm, which hastily pulled a cart in front of him. There was a fearful crush of fugitives in the narrow street, the Royalists getting no quarter and being slaughtered like sheep. Fleetwood's brigade at the same time were driving the rest of the Scots from beyond the river across St. John's bridge into the city. Charles still refusing to recognise that all was lost, called on his broken infantry to make a stand.

But old heads knew better. The King of Scotland, as he then was, was hurried to his lodging in the corn market, and as already told, just managed to slip out of its back door to horses got ready by faithful hands, as the Cromwellian Col. Cobbett entered in pursuit of him. Thence, guided by a man named Yates, Charles and Lord Wilmot escaped through St. Martin's gate, the only available exit left, and galloped to Whiteladies (not the Whiteladies near Boscobel), east of the city. Here through the assistance of a yeoman family, named Pendrell, he was hidden in a wood, supplied with food and a rustic dress, and started on that long career of a hunted fugitive, which is really a much more wonderful story, seeing the populous nature of the country, than the much-sung and written-of adventures of his great-nephew in the wilds of Scotland.

Three thousand Scottish soldiers lay dead in and around the city as the fruit of Cromwell's "crowning mercy". Ten thousand prisoners and wounded remained on his hands, the very number, curiously enough, that the Scots had lost at Dunbar. Once again the Cathedral became a prison, a hospital and a stable. The loss of the Government troops

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was comparatively slight. Rowland Berkeley of Cotheridge, who had refused Charles' invitation to join him, rode over the scene of battle the next day and has left a description of how thick the corpses lay in the fields across the river.

Cotheridge, it may be noted, lies west of Worcester upon the Teme. Though re-fronted in disappointing fashion the rooms within retain their Tudor character, and what is more, many interesting contemporary documents relating to the civil wars. The mansion looks picturesquely down a half-mile avenue of limes and elms, and Berkeleys are still in possession. The Sir Rowland above alluded to, though of an even then ancient family, was a wealthy clothier in Worcester. A family tradition tells of a faithful butler of the civil war time who on one of these occasions when the Roundheads were uppermost in the district buried the plate somewhere in the avenue. The servant was shot in a skirmish immediately afterwards and could only gasp out "Plate—avenue" to the person with him, as he died. In spite of diligent search it has never been discovered to this day.

The recalcitrant Scottish cavalry galloped away towards Scotland in scattered bands. Clarendon tells us that scarcely any of them crossed the Border, so roughly were they handled on their journey by the country people. Perhaps they deserved it! But their strange behaviour remains something of a mystery to this day. There seems, however, to have been some disaffection among the Scots themselves, and there must assuredly have been bitter disappointment at the small support given by the English to a cause in which they had ventured everything. Nor was the young Charles himself, waggish, cynical and openly bored by the Calvinistic atmosphere of Scotland, the man to attract their personal devotion. The Duke of Hamilton, his leg carried away by a cannon ball, died, as related, in the Commandery near which the chief slaughter took place. The wounded Massey and other prisoners of note were sent to London to stand their trial. The rest, however, mostly Scots, were cruelly driven like sheep

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to London and Bristol, and there herded in cramped quarters that occasioned a fearful mortality. The survivors, numbering many thousands, were shipped as indentured servants, otherwise as white slaves, to the West Indies, where their descendants to-day form a more or less degenerate caste among the other white inhabitants. A strange contrast to the Scottish colonists who, under happier circumstances, both there and to a far greater extent in other colonies, form such a conspicuously prosperous element. Thus at Worcester ended the last great battle fought upon English soil. For Sedgemoor was a mere slaughter of rustics while Preston and Penrith were but skirmishes by comparison.

Worcester has had some shining bishops and a few extremely shady ones. The domestic life which the Reformation introduced into the Palace and Hartlebury Castle was not always a change for the better, apart from the fact that it vastly increased that unblushing nepotism by which so many prelates from that day till a quite recent one gave occasion for scandal. Only a year or two before the civil war Worcester had been relieved of a factious wordly-minded bishop of Puritan views without the Puritan virtues. He encouraged irreverence and untidyness and everything unorthodox in his Cathedral, quarrelled continually with the Dean and Chapter who cherished the proper traditions of reverence and decency, and stuffed his relations into all the best things in his gift, even to occasionally flouting the nominations of the Crown in their favour. This state of things the diocese had to endure for about thirty years. Slovenliness and nepotism, however, were not confined then or later to Bishop Thornburgh, but no bishop, I should imagine, perpetrated quite such nefarious practices as are debited to this pious soul in the records of the House of Lords.

For with his Lordship's connivance his son appears to have abducted a co-heiress of the Acton estate, aged fifteen, from her mother's house, detained her for six weeks at the Palace and then with the assistance of his father married her. She had

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£4000 which in due course the bishop induced her to expend in the liquidation of his scapegrace son's debts. Soon afterwards, she declares in her suit-at-law, His Right Reverence turned her and her children into the street because she refused to continue relations with this proper scoundrel of a husband. She obtained from the Court alimony to the amount of 15s. a week, which these clerical financial operators, bishop and son, never paid, though they were ultimately forced to disgorge £180. Twenty years later this unfortunate lady was making her living by needlework and was described in a petition to the Crown as co-heiress of Sir Thomas Acton, but ruined in fortune by her marriage to the bishop's son.

Lest it be thought that this episcopal household were by some means or other traduced in the official records, further proof of their character is afforded in the same chronicle by a petition of Sir R. Willoughby to the effect that at fourteen he had been induced to marry the bishop's daughter Elizabeth, and that by the deceit of herself and her family he had been defrauded of the manor of Turners Puddle in Dorsetshire. His wife had long deserted him, gone abroad professedly as a nun but was now living riotously.

The energy and enterprise of the earlier generations of the Sandys family were no doubt inherited from their founder the bishop, "a stirring and stout man," who knew nothing of half measures, whether in persecuting Nonconformists of all descriptions or in enriching his own family with alienated Church property. He was a native of the Lake country and educated at St. John's, Cambridge, whence he rose to be master of St. Catherine's and a forcible figure in the University. He stoutly pressed the claims of Lady Jane Grey in a University sermon and made a defiant speech in the Senate House on her behalf, flourishing his dagger in the faces of those who opposed him. For this he was sent to the Tower and thence to the Marshalsea prison, from which, after nine months, he was released at the instance of Queen Mary. But he was no sooner out than the Catholics made an outcry that the greatest heretic in

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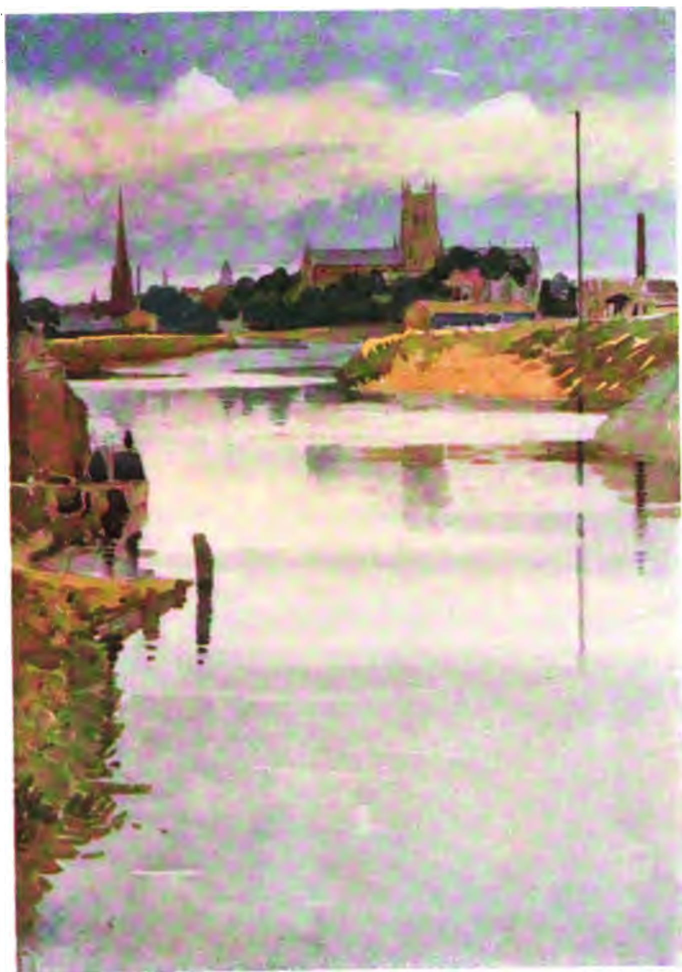

WORCESTER

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England had been turned loose, and Sandys was only just in time to escape re-arrest, the ship he was in just leaving the shore as the constables rode up. He remained at Strasbourg till the accession of Elizabeth and the Protestant reaction when he returned to England and took a vigorous hand among the extreme reformers in the Anglican Church and was a stern opponent of the ritual that remained to it. He was quickly made Bishop of Worcester and was so severe on those of his clergy who differed from him that the Archbishop had to interfere. He laid about him too among the ancient monuments and ornaments in his diocese, working havoc with the stone altars of Worcestershire and Warwickshire. He was at constant strife through his high-handed methods of suppressing Nonconformity and solaced himself by granting Church property of all kinds to his relations. It was quite easy for a bishop with an elastic conscience to endow and found a family in the past days of the Anglican Church—nothing indeed easier. It was occasionally done up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. He had only to let Church property on long leases at an inadequate figure to a son, nephew, or brother, who either converted the lease immediately into ready money or re-let the property at the full rent and enjoyed the difference. Miles Sandys, for instance, had Fladbury, one of the best manors in the diocese, for three lives at a nominal rent and also the rectory, one of the best in England, for ninety-nine years on similar terms. He also got Overbury, which he sold for £300. The Dean and Chapter sometimes put up a fight against such enormities. But Bishop Sandys coerced even the Dean and compelled him to endow his lady (the bishopess) with a fat living and even his servants were rewarded with spoils of the Church. Nor did he forget himself. By bribes and threats he acquired a lease out of which he made £600. He pulled down manor-houses belonging to the See and sold the materials. He even dismantled in part the episcopal palaces at Hartlebury and Worcester, tearing up planks, stripping lead from the roofs and taking away forms, stools and

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cupboards and selling them. Just before his translation he was for grasping the leases of broad corn lands at Hallow. Then at last the worm turned and the Dean and Chapter positively put their foot down. The manor of Ombersley, where the family, as we have seen, still dwell, he acquired from the Queen for his infant son and there would appear to have been nothing predatory about this transaction. He was now translated to London where he made things very hot for Nonconformists of all kinds, attacking even the legitimate rights of foreign embassies to celebrate mass in their own chapels. This militant bishop would obviously have been a sort of Protestant Alva if he had had the chance. He was in due course made Archbishop of York where his campaigns against the papists, ranging from "blackmailers to countesses" were met with sullen but obstinate resistance, so their "scurvie sheep" went to prison in flocks. But the Archbishop quarrelled with the Anglicans too. The Dean of Durham closed the Cathedral doors in his face, telling him that he lacked apostolic grace and was a lover of filthy lucre. Even the Dean of York refused this episcopal fire-brand's entry to the Cathedral and resisted his innovations so stoutly that Sandys begged Burghley to make him a bishop.

"Stand my good friend in this matter; I cannot live with this man. The bishopric of Litchfield would serve the turn." Thus were bishops made, though as a matter of fact, Dean Hutton was a man of character and ability. His real cause of offence lay in his persistent refusal to allow the Archbishop the patent of church lands for his son! The latter's enemies were naturally numerous and a trap was contrived for ruining the old man in a manner that combined both scandal and ridicule. An innkeeper at a house where the Archbishop had to stop on one of his journeys was bribed to introduce his wife into the guest's chamber while the latter was asleep and then to follow close on her steps and pose as the injured husband when the unfortunate victim awoke. This made so much noise as eventually to worry this pious plunderer into

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retirement but not before he had laid his persecutor by the heels in durance vile, where he would have remained for life if it had not been for Burghley.

The battle of Worcester, so much of which was fought in the meadows across the bridge in the suburb of St. John, reminds me that the beautiful old red sandstone church of that village is a fine landmark of the past, standing in its wide and shady graveyard, at the junction of three great highways. It is the most picturesque and venerable of all the Worcester churches, for though some way across the river it is within the city limits. It consists of a chancel with south aisle, a north transept and a nave with aisles, and an embattled crocketted fifteenth-century tower. The north arch of the nave is Norman, though the circular arches were pointed, probably when the rest of the church, which is Perpendicular, was rebuilt. Later alterations of a tasteless kind are a blemish to the interior. Around it the battle of 1651 must have raged fiercely and numbers of the slain no doubt were buried within its precints.

For Worcester worthies, in the accepted sense of the word, I have not left, I fear, much space, and a complete list would be a long one; far too long, I am quite certain, for the patience of my readers.

Samuel Foote, the comedian, was widely connected in and about Worcester, and educated at its school, where he declaimed the satires of Horace in class with such humour as to keep boys and master alike in a state of loud, uncontrollable laughter. His sense of humour, however, outran his good taste. For the many friends who entertained the youth in Worcester were mercilessly taken off by this irrepressible mimic, a proceeding that they naturally resented, but his audiences, which often included Nash, the county historian, were proportionately delighted by his undiscriminating humours. Always lavish to eccentricity, Foote inherited the estate of Charlton through the Dinelys, and made a splash there for a year or two far beyond its capacities, a coach and six being among the incidentals of his establishment.

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The only excuse for mentioning Lord Somers, the great lawyer and statesman, more particularly associated with the reign and person of William III, so tardily among the worthies of Worcester, is the very fact that he is such a conspicuous figure in history as to need no further introduction. He was the son of a Worcestershire attorney, and was educated at the Cathedral school before proceeding to Oxford, and represented the city for a time in Parliament. Associated, and, in part, responsible for momentous changes, such as the reformed Constitution of 1688, and the subsequent union with Scotland, he was, at any rate, a very great lawyer, and Macaulay, as we know, rates him equally high as a statesman. He was also very much at home with all the great writers and wits of his day.

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CHAPTER XI

WORCESTER TO TEWKESBURY

MOST large rivers fall naturally into sections, or, at any rate, are apt thus to fall in the mind's eye of those familar with them. So with the Severn, this stretch from Worcester to Tewkesbury, like that higher reach from Bewdley to Worcester, seems a case in point. Moreover, both are about the same length, to wit, some twenty miles, more or less. The Bewdley to Worcester stretch, again, seems to fall into three subdivisions, marked by the bridges at Stourport and Holt respectively, though not a little emphasised by other features, natural and artificial. The lower stage, Worcester to Tewkesbury, is very decidedly cut in half at Upton; for not merely is this the only bridge upon it, but an ancient townlet stands actually on the flat by the riverside—a venturesome proceeding and, so far, without parallel in the Severn valley. Hitherto, the towns have all stood upon heights, while the villages, with rare exceptions, withdraw themselves to the rising ground. But Upton, for hundreds of years, has taken its chance, and there is nothing its gossips like better than pointing out the high water marks of the various inundations which have swept its streets and ground floors, and sometimes more.

You may, of course, walk by the old grass-grown tow-path from Worcester to Upton or Tewkesbury if you so choose, or in summer time you may board one of the small steamers which ply upon most days in the week and, I believe, occasionally go up to Bewdley. The latter proceeding sounds delightful, and undoubtedly would be so, but for the fifteen

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feet or thereabouts of red, tufty, crumbly bank which, more often than not, shuts out all view of the surrounding country to the traveller on the river's surface. Where high hills press against the river, or woods dip to its surface, this does not much matter. But among the wider meadows, through which the Severn, as seen from above, meanders so charmingly, a boating party or the like may see little more for some miles than a curious bullock on the bank top, or a solitary angler crouching among the dwarf willows which fringe the water.

For a mile or two below Worcester, as far as the locks at any rate, the river is sociable enough. Boating, both for pleasure and racing purposes, goes forward, while footpaths over fine meadows tempt the Worcester citizens in their hours of ease to air and exercise by their historic stream. Patient anglers, too, squat in a continuous line on the lower turf ridges of the high crumbly banks. At brief intervals of a few yards this dauntless throng, upon any ordinary day, extends itself for at least a mile below the city, while another score or so of more adventurous souls, courting greater solitude, or, perhaps, better chances of sport, may be reckoned up between this and Upton or Tewkesbury. I have never actually seen one of them catch anything, though, being myself a disciple, I have naturally never failed to be both interested and sympathetic on the abounding opportunities that have been afforded me of casting an expectant eye upon the patient sportsman and his irresponsive float.

The Teme, moreover, arrives just here, after a mile of rather dull sinuous journeying from the two bridges (old and new) at Powick, beneath which it prattles cheerfully as the bright grayling and trout stream it really is. A secluded, stealthy, unworthy confluence is this, almost like that of the Vyrnwy and the Severn, and in no way suggestive of the qualities of the tributary or the fair scenes it has watered. And the Teme is far the most important feeder of the Severn since it received the Vyrnwy on the frontier of Wales, and is

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much the most beautiful of all the Severn's English tributaries, though as a matter of fact it has its actual source in Wales, high up in the Kerry moors not far from the Severn at Newtown. It is out of our beat here, yet I would beg leave to entreat the reader, should he perchance be now or ever at Worcester, to take the highway by Cotheridge to Knightsford bridge, where the quality of the Teme scenery really begins. For, thence pursuing the byway which clambers the lofty ridge to the Devil's leap and Berow green, and winds along its summit amid delighfully sequestered homesteads, with the Severn valley and Worcester city lying 500 feet below upon the right, and the Teme coiling through its lovely vale as far below upon the left, he will traverse perhaps the most inspiring two miles of road in all Worcestershire. Thence dropping abruptly down to Martley with its ancient church, and pushing on further to the river bank, he may follow its rapid streams up the deep sunk woody vale to Tenbury. Fenced in by steep hill sides of beechen wood or bracken glade, enriched below by green pastures and hop fields, old villages, churches and an occasional country seat—the swift rippling river twisting from hill foot to hill foot—there is, I think, no other fifteen miles in the county that can be followed easily to such great profit.

But returning to the Severn; of the two roads which more or less follow the river on its east and west bank, the latter seems to me at any rate the most to be desired. For one thing, you are on closer terms with the Malvern hills, and for another the whole of the west side of the Severn was in olden days included in that sylvan wild, once known as Malvern chase, and noble relics of it in the form of ancient oaks are still freely scattered over parkland and pasture. The hills themselves, a chain of seven or eight continuous heights about nine miles long, rise parallel to the river at a distance ranging from three to six miles and in fact form the true western barrier of the Severn valley. The intervening strip of country which slopes gently up from the river to their

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feet is a charming medley of red fallow, verdant pasture and ferny commons—survivals these last of the old chase—of half-timbered homesteads, villages and ancient places of note. At Madresfield, Lord Beauchamp sits in the seat of his ancestors. For the Lygons began here in the fourteenth century, and in the civil war, being of the opposite party, had to remain without, while their moated Tudor house was held by a Royal garrison. In spite of necessary reconstruction and enlargement a good deal of the early house still remains. The Rhydd, a modern seat of another ancient local family, the Lechmeres, stands near the river, while behind it some magnificent elms and other trees are finely scattered about the sweeping open parklands through which the road to Upton runs its pleasant course just above the stream. The Severn here, for a short space and for the last time in its long course, runs picturesquely between high wooded banks, for henceforth it keeps to the open and rolls its unsociable way with rare exceptions through untenanted pasture lands. Farms, villages and manor-houses upon either side fall back to the hill foot in significant deference to the waste of waters into which a stormy season can at short notice transform the valley.

A word or two, however, must be said of the Malvern hills, however futile it may seem to treat of them in such parenthetic fashion. But they dominate this Worcester to Tewkesbury stretch of the Severn so completely and form such an imposing background to every view from it that it would be unpardonable to pass them by. The range springs almost as boldly up at its northern and southern extremity as do its steep sides from the plain below, thus forming what is virtually a high narrow wall without even flankers upon the east or west. It is this comparative attenuation which helps to give the modest altitude of these striking hills such exceptional dignity and their notched line of clear-cut summits such a mountainous character. The Worcestershire beacon, the highest and the second peak from the north, is

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1450 feet above sea level. The Herefordshire beacon, just to the south of it, is a fraction lower, but its summit is ennobled by the conspicuously clear-cut outlines of one of the finest British camps in England, while its almost certain connection with the last defensive campaign of the Silurians under Caractacus, which certainly terminated on the Upper Severn, whether on the Breidden or the Gaer, sets a further seal upon its lofty crown. In claiming for the summit of the Malverns the finest prospect in England I hope I do so with a full sense of what that means, and not with the levity of occasional newspaper correspondents who proclaim aloud their limitations from some Surrey hill top or Sussex Down. Not long ago the editor of a leading daily in the slack season invited correspondence on the subject of "The finest view in England". The result was a quite curious exposure of the average Englishman's ignorance of his own country. Nearly all these "*finest views in England*" were within about fifty miles of London and most of them admitted of no rival! One enthusiast could actually see into four counties from his unequalled perch! Another enraptured wight could look over the weald of Kent and with almost awe distinguish the distant Sussex Downs, or even the sea. A third gentleman (or lady) said there was a height in Essex that beyond a doubt commanded a view that could nowhere else be matched in all England. There was a score of these mostly in the same artless vein. Perhaps the editor suppressed the contributions from distant counties for the better comfort of the London week-ender. It was all very funny, yet characteristic enough of a nowadays immense class of English folk gathered in and around London whose opportunities for observation may, with slight metaphor, be described as confined to Surrey, Switzerland and perhaps Devon or Cornwall. This does not of course matter in the least but the effect is curious both in the press and in works of fiction.

The views from low hills or downs, over comparatively

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smooth and well-groomed regions, offering no striking contrasts, may, undoubtedly, be very charming. But, apart from the limitations mere geometry imposes on them, they are another thing altogether from such an outlook as is provided, for instance, by the Worcestershire beacon, at once so wide, so beautiful, and so moving. From here you may see at once into the rich heart of the English Midlands, and the remoter fastnesses of wild Wales; the cradle of Shakespeare upon the verge of sight upon one hand, and upon the other, the last refuge of the Welsh princes. And, again, you may turn southward, and catch the dim shapes of the eastern heights of Exmoor! I once looked from the top of the Church Stretton moors, considerably higher, of course, than the Malverns, into every one of the twelve Welsh counties. It was a day in a hundred, though there was no sun. Every single mountain range in north and south Wales, every outstanding hill from Carnarvonshire to Pembrokeshire lay clear-cut, as if carved in grey paper; easily to be identified in detail by any one as familiar with the Principality as I am privileged to be. The view from a great mountain like Snowdon, Cader Idris, or Helvellyn, is a thing apart with a rather different appeal. Moreover, our greatest heights are all upon the fringe of the land. From Dartmoor, you may look all over Devonshire, with a bit also of Cornwall. From Exmoor, which has some advantage, you get much of this, together with the whole of the Severn, sea, and the coast and mountains of South Wales. From the Cheviot summits, you command the whole of the border. But I have not in mind the relative beauty of views: such comparisons would be ridiculous.

But the position of the Malverns, standing as they do upon the very border of the two extremes of British landscape, and gloriously envisaging them both, gives this one such an altogether unique quality. It embraces at once the gracious heart of England, and the wild heart of Wales, the lush luxuriance of the Midlands, the very essence of Saxon England on the one hand, on the other, that uplifted chaos of hill

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and mountain, which is significant of the blood and genius and romance of the ancient race of Britain. Here, perched thus high above the Severn, a child could almost see why that river, more than any in the land, has made history. A turn of the heel, a mere shift of the eye, and the latter may rest on Somerset, Carnarvon, or the smoke cloud above Birmingham. In brief, from Devon to Stafford, from Carnarvon to Oxford, say twenty counties, comprise the range covered from the Worcestershire Beacon. The long ridge of Edgehill, dropping abruptly to the Stratford and Warwickshire low ground, is visible upon the eastern verge of sight. To the west, the pointed peaks of the Brecon beacons mark the very heart of Wales, merging into the dimmer shapes of the Carmarthen Vans, a far-away country, where English is still a strange tongue. And, away in the far north-west, the grimmer masses of Snowdonia may be added to a picture which includes the hills of Somerset and the elm-shaded pastures of Warwickshire! Surely Piers Plowman chose a fitting perch for his immortal picture of England, when he climbed the Malverns! A single *coup d'œil* of such a vast slice of one's native land, beneath a clear sky, is to me, at any rate, profoundly impressive. I am not talking for the moment from an artist's point of view, nor of lights and shades of colouring or composition. The feelings aroused by such a sight as this are not those which are moved by the mere charms of nature, or of some lovely scene. They assuredly go deeper than any appeal to the senses, or to the artistic emotions. To put it briefly, the mind and heart are more engaged than the eye, after the first bewildering glory of the scene has been absorbed. The man who can *feel* a country will find much more up here than he who can only paint one, and the two do not often go together, and, indeed, why should they? For those who possess this precious sense, and, I trust, there are many such, let me wish them a fine morning some day upon the Worcestershire beacon.

But as we are concerned with the Severn below, I must

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pause for a moment to note the beautiful colouring which the red soil of Worcestershire gives to the vale, and far beyond the vale, the radiancy of the meadows and commons, here touched with the moisture of the west country, the luxuriance of the foliage of this old Malvern Chase country, and if it be autumn, the splendour of its tints stretching away to the long line of the Cotswolds, which with Bredon hill, fill the south-western horizon. Worcester and its cathedral stand well out but a few miles away, while to the north, the deep windings of the Teme valley with Woodbury and Abberly hills confronting it, are among the notable bits of what may be called the nearer prospect. As for the rest of this far-flung panorama, I have no intention of taking a point-to-point survey of it here. To come to mere prose, if there is any beacon height so qualified to provide a lesson in the physical geography of England and Wales to inquiring youth, I have yet to find it. And I think I have mounted every height that could possibly contest the claim between the English Channel and the Tweed.

The various Malverns are themselves well up-lifted along the base of the hills, and if a lovely site and access to all sorts of inspiring scenes count for anything, their people are to be envied. The high road from Worcester to Malvern by Powick bridge and village, the scene of two decisive battles, is well worthy of accomplishment; not in the eighteen minutes which is consumed by an ordinary motor run, for that is useless, but in some leisurely manner more conformable to an appreciation of the historic associations of the first half of the way, and of the striking shapes which the hills themselves assume in the latter part, framed, as they are, in the great arches of forest trees which overhang the road. And at the foot of the hills, too, springs the lovely, old priory church of Great Malvern, almost cathedral-like in its proportions.

It was only saved by the parishioners from sharing the fate of its Benedictine monastery at the Dissolution. Nothing has gone of this noble cruciform building but the south transept and the Lady chapel, though a great deal of necessary

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restoration was done fifty years ago. An exterior of Perpendicular character, significantly suggestive of Gloucester Cathedral, includes a high embattled tower, a nave with aisles, a north transept and a chapel full of interesting detail and rich in memories. Its chief glory, however, is its Norman nave, though the Perpendicular work in clerestory, nave and tower, east window and elsewhere, some of it by the same hand that built the Henry VII chapel at Westminster, is very fine. Another valued possession is the fifteenth-century glass of which, thanks to the neglect of bygone days, only remnants are left. There is still, however, a beautiful west window, thought to be the gift of Richard III, and part of a north window put up by Henry VII, in which the figure of Prince Arthur is still intact. There are also some most curious miserere stalls. The priory was an off-shoot of Worcester, founded by the good Bishop Wulfstan. So many hermits had retired across the river to the forests under the Malvern hills, that Wulfstan came to the conclusion that they would be more serviceable if rounded up into a monastery, and some thirty were collected at Malvern as a beginning, under a Worcester monk, Aldwin. The high character borne by the monks of Malvern at the Dissolution was made a matter of special request to the king. The story is not an uncommon one. The egregious Henry gave it to a more or less obscure person, who then sold it to a country squire, from whom the parishioners redeemed it by payment, not only to be a glorious parish church for all time, but an object of beauty and relic of the past in a place which, though bright and cheerful enough, is almost wholly modern. Henry VII and Prince Arthur on a visit to Malvern are said to have lodged in the gateway tower of the priory, which though very much restored is still a decorative accessory to the precincts.

At Little Malvern, towards the southern extremity of the hills, another priory was founded in the twelfth century by one of those colonies of monks, who breaking away from the greater houses—in this case Worcester—sought seclusion in

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the wooded and then unpopulated country across the Severn. Little Malvern Court now occupies its site. It was granted at the Dissolution to the Russels of Strensham, whose descendants on the female side still occupy it. The original chancel and tower are now the parish church.

Though we have here no call for its service in returning to the Severn, which must be done without further delay, a note may be usefully made that an extremely pretty road runs straight down from Great Malvern to the Rhydd, at which point on the river we drifted away from it some pages back. About two miles on, and half-way to Upton, is the village of Hanley Castle. This presents to the passer-by little worthy of notice except an admirable specimen of a small half-timbered manor-house by the roadside, and a rather interesting church a short way from it. But Hanley had some fame of old, for even in Saxon times it seems to have been a sort of oasis, an administrative centre of this trans-Severn forest, and the foundation still remains of a castle erected in the early Norman period by the potent earls of Gloucester in which Leland says they often lay. The manor was given by Edward I to Gilbert de Clare, who married his daughter Joan. This Marcher lord, who, it will be remembered, was killed at Bannockburn, has left his mark on the Severn country in the shape of a ditch upon the crest of the Malvern hills, still called by his name. He dug it to set bounds to what he considered the Bishop of Worcester's encroachments on his own territory. But there is a curious story connected with Hanley, which concerns some other very great personage, and Freeman, to whom everything vague and traditional was anathema, virtually accepts this one as genuine.

Now just before the Norman conquest, a handsome Saxon Theyn, named Brhitric, was lord of Hanley, and was sent by Edward the Confessor as an envoy on some matter between them, to Baldwin, Count of Flanders, whose daughter Matilda afterwards married William the Conqueror. The lady, it seems, was mightily taken with the fascinating Englishman, who failed,

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however, to appreciate the honour. In after days when England lay at her husband's mercy, the spiteful Queen, in whose breast the rebuff had rankled, caused the hapless Brhitric to be seized, while in the act of attending Bishop Wulfstan at the consecration of his own chapel at Hanley, carried off to Winchester and there incarcerated till his death. The manor, as related, went to the Earls of Gloucester. Bishop Bonner was a native of Hanley Castle, the son of "an honest poor man," one Bower who lived in a house called Bower's Place. The bishop remained always intimate with the Lechmere family, indeed, the squire of his day first put him to school. It is curious, too, that Wolsey should have resided in his youth, as chaplain not very far away at Birtsmorton, which with its fourteenth-century work and embattled gateway is one of the finest specimens of a moated manor-house left in Worcestershire, or indeed in England. From the same house, or, at any rate from the family who owned it, came Hakluyt, the great Elizabethan geographer and preserver of the priceless records of early colonial enterprise. The church of Hanley Castle is curious, most of it being late seventeenth century, and a mixture of red brick and stone. The nave alone represents the original building of the fifteenth century, erected by the Earl of Warwick. The north chancel aisle is the burying-place of the Lechmeres, and is full of their memorials from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, while on the south side reposes the dust of many generations of Hornyolds, another ancient and still surviving family of the neighbourhood. Severn-End, the old and chief seat of the Lechmeres, stands down by the river side just lifted above flood level. It was a beautiful, and, even in a country rich in such treasures, justly celebrated Tudor building, forming three sides of a square. The greater part of it was unhappily burnt down a few years ago, but was rebuilt on the exact lines of the old house. The workmen were just completing what they told me was a replica of the original, when I visited it some years ago. The same fate overtook Blackmore Park, the seat of the Hornyolds,

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in this same parish, about thirty-five years ago, and this house too was rebuilt. These two families are among the oldest in the Severn valley, to which the ancient stocks have clung with a tenacity rare enough in most English counties. Both were conspicuous in the civil war, though on different sides. The Hornyolds were such staunch Royalists that the squire of that day, not satisfied apparently with the fines incidental to sequestration, was one of the few local Cavaliers to turn out again for the younger Charles at the battle of Worcester. A popular punishment for an over-zealous Royalist was to cut down all his woods and hand over the proceeds in coin to some deserving Commonwealth warrior. In this case £5000 worth of timber was cleared off the Hornyold property, making, one would imagine, a pretty clean sweep of every stick of it, a catastrophe which beneficent time has amply repaired. The exquisite half-timbered house already alluded to and standing by the roadside in the village, is, I believe, the original seat of this family, which came in during Elizabeth's reign. Upton is but a mile and a half beyond, and the road joins company with the river before reaching it.

But in the greater attractions of the Malvern side of the river it must not be forgotten that the Worcester and Upton road upon the other bank has perhaps some positive advantage, in the glimpses it affords of the Severn itself. The village of Severn Stoke, again, nearly opposite Hanley, is of particular interest. The church, lying picturesquely seated upon park-like meadows near the river, is a fine old stone building containing both Norman, Early English, Perpendicular and Decorated work, with an embattled tower of the latter period, while Severnbank, a country house close by, extends its beautiful woods almost to the riverside. There are many monuments in the church to the Coventry family and their seat of Earls Croome is close by. Nearer Worcester, on the same road and the same bank of the river, is the large village of Kempsey, which to judge from its many attractive houses is well provided with what a modern writer has not inaptly

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termed the village gentry, otherwise, the folk of independent means and social eligibility, who in southern England do perhaps more than their broad-acred neighbours to keep up an all-the-year-round vitality in rural districts.

Upton certainly does not suggest a plenitude of such *rentiers* or anything so lively, though it has a population of two thousand souls, including the workhouse. But the little town has a good deal of sombre interest attached to it though we have forestalled its great historical event while describing the battle of Worcester. Of the church, which was the chief scene of the conflict and was set fire to on that memorable occasion, all save the fourteenth-century tower was rebuilt a hundred years afterwards and looks it all over. Though picturesquely situated at the riverside end of the town it was abandoned nearly forty years ago for a new one erected some distance off, more edifying no doubt in all respects to the parishioners but of no concern to us. Whether the Georgian builder scamped his work or whether the Uptonians could no longer endure it as a place of worship I do not know. But for some time now its sole mission is as a place of temporary deposit for such corpses as are occasionally recovered from the Severn. I was told it was unsafe and from a peep into its dilapidated interior I can well believe it. The late Archbishop Benson had some humorous recollections of it in his youth, the vocal music being then wholly centered in a despotic clerk who wore a wig and large horn spectacles, a black suit and a white tie. Accompanied by a flute, clarionet, violin and 'cello in the now rotting gallery, he sang a loud but untuneful solo, no one else in the church venturing to accept his invitation to sing "to the praise and glory of God" either psalm or hymn. All has now been abandoned to the bats and owls. It was quite usual in the later Georgian period to add a gallery when an unusually eloquent vicar or curate more than filled the accommodation. As a tangible and abiding mark of individual achievement scores of those disfiguring innovations have the merit at least of their origin, which few

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people, I fancy, attribute to the eloquence of some forgotten preacher.

There was a fine steeple on the tower in 1754 which was hauled down by ropes stretched across the river and there attached to horses. The preposterous re-placement of that day still stands on the Norman tower in the shape of a wooden cupola of the type so common on the older rural court houses of America and an astounding object on such a perch. If a modern local handbook to Upton, however, reflects the opinion of the citizens they are more than pleased with it, reminding, so it seems, those who have not been there of St. Peter's at Rome! Though no longer rich in houses that are both old and picturesque like Bewdley, Upton wears an unavoidably old-time aspect, for its story, though on a far smaller scale, is much the same, namely, that of a Severn trading town left high and dry by its old occupants, though not always by the Severn which pours into it periodically in spite of the high bank on which it stands, and, according to the flood marks of notable years indicated on walls and the like, must make things extremely uncomfortable. A nice old-fashioned inn, on the High Street, the *White Lion*, is mentioned in *Tom Jones*, and Fielding is said to have spent some time in it.

The old trows, horse-barges, and boats have long gone from the Severn. The trains of packhorses that carried river-borne goods from here into the adjacent Border counties are phantom memories indeed. Once a day, perhaps oftener, the middle section of the modern bridge at Upton is swung back and a tug steamer with a long trail of eight or ten tarpaulin-covered barges goes swiftly and silently through, leaving no trace of their passing but the dull thud of their back swell upon the banks. Melancholy sound no doubt in the ears of old Uptonians who remember not, to be sure, the great days of old, but at any rate very different ones from these. A tale is told of a barge-load of soldiers coming under the old Upton bridge on its way down the river to assist in the suppression of Monmouth's rebellion. The feeling was very bitter just

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then against the newly-established standing army, a thing of horror as we know to our forefathers, particularly to the country squires whose authority and dignity as militia officers were thereby diminished. It was demonstrated so forcibly on this occasion that one or two soldiers were wounded, while Upton, threatened with official vengeance, was glad to escape with a fine. It was Charles I, in his everlasting need of money, who inadvertently populated and developed the great royal chase and forest of Malvern on the west bank of the Severn. For he sold it in tracts as freehold, which he had no earthly business to do, to the great discomfort of the peasants and others who had customary rights on the commons and wastes. It was then quickly enough cleared, cultivated, developed and built upon, many of the beautiful half-timbered houses still standing throughout this region dating from that time.

As former lords of the Manor, at Upton, we again find Bromleys, for generations seated at Ham Court, a mile or so down the river on the right bank. The son of the great Lord Chancellor, who presided at the trial of Mary Queen of Scots, and bought Holt Castle from Anthony Bourne, purchased the Ham Court and Upton estate from Bourne's daughter. The said Bourne's father, Sir John, though a Roman Catholic, and chief secretary to that dismal couple of cold-blooded fanatics, Mary and Philip, who, in fact, gave him Ham Court, had no objection to enjoying plundered church lands. His son Anthony, a dissipated, quarrelsome scamp—indeed, his father seems to have been little better—closed, I think, the family record here. Sir Henry Bromley was a man of parts, if not of intregrity, and a *persona grata* in the brilliant circles of Elizabeth's Court. His fourth, and last, wife was the very elderly widow of a London woolstapler. She probably had money, for, though sixty-nine years of age at Sir Henry's death, she was characteristically appropriated by that Bishop Thornburgh of Worcester, the outrages of whose fortune-hunting family have been already related. Sir Henry took

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a prominent, local part in the suppression of the Gunpowder Plot, which was in its inception almost a local affair, Catesby, the Wyntours and the Lyttletons, the Wrights, the Grants of Northbrooke, and the Habingtons of Hindlip, near Worcester, and others not actually involved, being nearly all Worcestershire men. Sir Henry Bromley went to Hindlip as sheriff, to conduct the famous search in what was then a great rabbit warren of a house, with many secret hiding-places. The story of how hunger at last unearthed the unfortunate guests and others, who had defied all search, is a familiar one. But the Squire of Hindlip just managed to save his neck, by pretexts that matter nothing here, and was reserved for greater things. For the death sentence was commuted to a life-long restriction to the limits of his own county. Upon this, like a sensible man, and being gifted, no doubt, with the requisite temperament, he devoted his days to acquiring a knowledge of that county and its people, and writing their history. In short, he provided much of the material which Mr. Nash, in the next century, converted into one of the most illuminating of county histories. It is said of Habington that he was so scrupulous in the literal interpretation of his sentence that, in taking his notes one day in a church, the east end of which was in Warwickshire, he rigidly refused to accompany the parson up the chancel steps.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Martin family, through marriage with a Bromley heiress, acquired Ham Court, largely rebuilt it, and are still there. The present house, conspicuously uplifted amid park-like slopes above the river, with the Malvern hills six miles away as a background, makes a pleasing feature in the landscape as you ascend the river, which keeps an almost straight course for some miles above Tewkesbury, through meadows liable to frequent floods. On the higher ground above these flood levels stands Pull Court, the seat of another ancient Severn-side family, the Dowdeswells, owners of practically the whole parish of Bushley, which here skirts the river. To the

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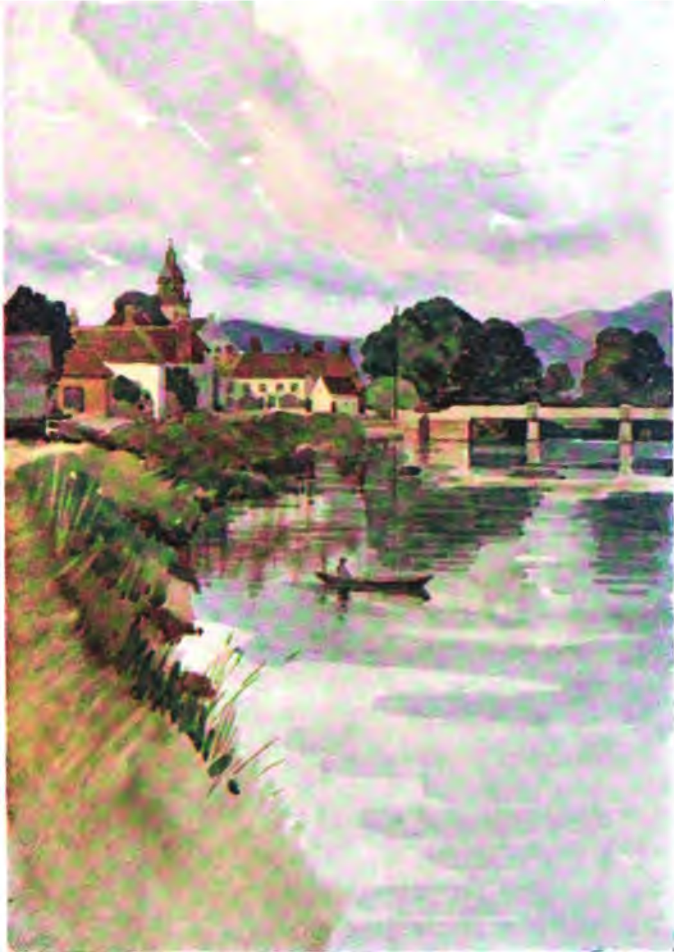

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present owner's best belief—and Canon Dowdeswell[1] has done much himself to illuminate the past of this portion of the Severn valley—the founder of the Pull Court family came of yeoman stock in the Cotswolds. And here, again, it was a lawyer that established a prominent and enduring race. For Roger Dowdeswell, of the New Inn, London, made a rapid fortune, and purchased these lands. Richard, the second owner of Pull Court, was an active loyalist, and a Commissioner of Array for the King's armies, and rode with Sir William Russell of Strensham, through Tewkesbury, at the head of the first troops raised for the King. He was arraigned as a delinquent by Parliament, and, having suffered the usual losses by sequestration and fines, emerged as member for Tewkesbury in Charles the Second's first parliament, and sat on the committee for the trial of the regicides. For many generations the Dowdeswells represented Tewkesbury or the county in Parliament. One was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Rockingham administration, and an intimate friend of Edmund Burke. On kissing hands at the assumption of office, the King remarked on its being his first experience as a Minister, "Lucky man, Sir! lucky man—no words to eat!" Another Dowdeswell followed Lord Lake as Commander-in-Chief in India. The present house was built some eighty years ago on the site of an old half-timbered mansion. It occupies, in Tudor fashion, three sides of a square, the fourth, of iron railings and wrought gates, completing the quadrangle, through which runs the approach to the front door. I have refrained in this, as in my other books of the kind, from cataloguing, for such it must almost inevitably amount to, the objects of beauty or interest that have been accumulated by most old families still *in situ*. Reproduced in the pages of an art or antiquarian magazine, particularly when illustrated, they appeal, more or less, to the specialist, who is content with a description of curios and furniture that, in the ordinary course, he will never see. It is quite another matter, however, when a story, full of human interest, attaches to some particular

[1] Since deceased.

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article, and there is an old chimney clock at Pull Court, which plays old English tunes at certain hours through the day and night, that has such a story, and I will try and reduce this, as told me by its owner, to a brief compass, without, I hope, undue mutilation.

The clock came into the family about eighty years ago, through a lady who married an uncle of the present proprietor, and I may as well say at once that it is merely of interest as having belonged to the heroine of the tale. As the latter is partly told in Burke's *Romance of the Aristocracy*, there is probably no objection to giving names, but, as these are of no consequence to the story, being an authentic and not a very old one, I will omit them.

At the beginning of the last century, Lord T—, the eldest son of Lord F—, formed a youthful attachment to a domestic servant in his father's house, the result of which was a female child. He died soon afterwards, and the young woman brought the child to the old Earl to beg his protection for her. Though a stern and haughty soul, he took the infant on his knee, and, exclaiming "She has poor T.'s eyes," determined to recognise her and bring her up as his grandchild, under the name of Catherine S. While the old peer lived he never parted from her, and, when he died, entrusted her to Mr. and Mrs. M— of B— Park, with an allowance of £3000 a year, and the reversion to a large estate when she came of age. She grew up in the family of her guardians, who, naturally, had secret hopes of an alliance with one of their own sons. Natural affinities not developing in that direction, and the guardians being of another stamp and another century to Bishop and Mrs. Thornburgh, they took the heiress to Italy, where she took music lessons from an Italian of noble family, who had lost his patrimony. It is not supposed that at the time she in any way favoured the Italian, who, however, lost his heart to her. Indeed, it was thought that her affections were engaged elsewhere in England. But, on returning in a hurry to escape the music master, she seems to have met

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with disappointment in the expected quarter. In due course, the enamoured Italian followed the lady to England, and caught her heart on the rebound. He then declared that he was the rightful heir to a dukedom and the headship of one of the oldest noble families in Italy, which, for four hundred years, had been among the political leaders of their country.

For lack of direct heirs the honours and estates had gone to a collateral, whose claim the young music-master was confident he could upset in his own favour if he had the means. In this bald narrative it might, so far, appear to have a flavour of the eternal confidence trick of the matrimonial kind played upon an innocent girl. But it was, in fact, nothing of the kind. Perhaps the heiress was shrewd, and not being seriously in love with the Italian, was the better judge of his honesty. The guardians were not so sympathetic, and opposed the match with might and main, as was their bounden duty. So the pair ran away and got married at Gretna Green, and proceeding at once to institute proceedings in the Italian courts, were entirely successful, so the happy couple became the Duke and Duchess of S—— and lived, no doubt, happily, but at any rate led a life of distinction among the greatest in their own country. Canon Dowdeswell tells how his cousin, whose mother had been one of the M—— family and playmates in youth of the Duchess, found her living in Rome in 1874, full of years, with the memories of her girlhood in England still vividly cherished in her mind. That is how the illegitimate daughter of a domestic servant became a duchess, and the chimney clock at Pull Court, which was hers as a girl, is there to tell the story.

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CHAPTER XII

TEWKESBURY

THE wanderer, emerging from the pleasant by-ways of Bushley parish upon the west bank of Severn, will find himself almost at once upon the highway from Ledbury to Tewkesbury. Half a mile of straight, willow-bound and dyke-bordered road crosses the river meads and leaps the Severn by an iron bridge of the ubiquitous Telford's make to join the road from Worcester. As one traverses the narrow, flat vale, or stands upon the bridge, the downward view is a slightly novel one in Severn scenery, and with a quality of its own. For beyond a great sweep of level unenclosed meadow-land, two hundred acres perhaps in extent, through which the river, in sullen mood, pursues an almost straight course, the ancient, low-lying town of Tewkesbury spreads its entire length, with the massive tower and long, lofty nave of its noble abbey looming up against the sky. Shakespeare's Avon does not slip unseen and stealthily into the Severn in spots remote from the haunts of men, like the Vyrnwy and the Teme, but, on the contrary, effects its junction amid quite busy scenes of modern life and ancient fame. The great flat, above alluded to, lies in the angle of the converging rivers, and the waters of Avon contribute of their abundance to those notorious floods which give Tewkesbury at times the appearance of a lake-shore town. The latter lies actually upon the Avon, not upon the Severn, which sweeps away some half-mile to the westward, making here, for a short distance, quite a sharp turn into more picturesque and contracted windings. The entrance to

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Tewkesbury across the Avon is altogether delightful, and worthy both of the town and river—and this is saying a good deal. For the latter, though utterly different in character from the Teme and infinitely different from the Vyrnwy, is the most beautiful of purely Midland rivers, while the former, architecturally, is, beyond a doubt, in the very front rank of English country towns.

Though lying on the flat, and without any near background of heights to set it off, it has to rest, as it were, upon its own intrinsic merits, and these are very great indeed. From a distance, where the striking isolated mass of Bredon hill and the long, high line of the Cotswolds fill the background, one begins to feel it is part of a fine natural scheme, and it gathers that atmosphere of environment significant historically, as well as satisfying to the eye, which perfection demands. But its real quality lies in its streets and its noble abbey, though the mere fact of standing at the confluence of two rivers, both famous in their respective characters, gives it a claim that one must not forget in the rather triste foreground of often flooded flat in which these historic streams embrace each other.

I have commended the northern entrance to Tewkesbury by the Worcester road, but there I had detail in mind rather than general effect, for later on in this chapter I shall assuredly have cause to eat my words since the approach to the town at the abbey end from the south is unquestionably the more striking. In this other it is the combination of the venerable red sandstone bridge of four heavily buttressed arches, with the beautiful black and white hostelry which at the further side of it has welcomed, for hundreds of years, and still welcomes the stranger to Tewkesbury, that makes the picture. Nobody seems to know the date of the bridge but it is probably sixteenth-century work, while as for the Bear Hotel which once displayed the "ragged staff" as the coat of the Warwick family on its sign, its Tudor origin is writ plain enough all over its gabled front. The Avon here parts into two streams;

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one of them skirts the gardens and back premises of the town and turns its two mills. The other forms the navigable outlet to the Severn in a cut through the meadows and starts from a basin whence pleasure boats, barges, and the occasional steamer ply their trade. The pleasure boats for the most part go up the Avon, which provides a course of some miles below the first lock. Unlike the bigger Severn its tributary is a delightful river for the milder form of boating. Being canalised the water wells up more or less bank high, and the first reach up to Twyning ferry and thence up to Bredon and Strensham is charming. But the Avon is pre-eminently a river for boating, as the average mortal understands the word: a lunch hamper in the bow, that is to say, and perhaps a parasol or two in the stern, moderate exercise in sufficiently effective but hopelessly unorthodox style intermingled with a good deal of pleasant loafing under the tall reeds or bushes. The Severn, on the other hand, is hereabouts only for the serious oarsman. Outrigged eight-oars, fours and skiffs, with sliding seats lurk in the seclusion of their boat houses. Two or three times a week a special train from Cheltenham deposits a few score of the college boys, who, for half a century at any rate, have done their training and boat racing here, on a course that a Cantab or Oxonian might well contemplate with envy. But the Avon does not embellish the town of Tewkesbury as it does those of Evesham and Stratford, though one outlet skirting its back premises runs down towards the Severn, and at the old abbey mill, underneath which it rushes into a wide heaving pool, does give a brief touch of picturesque water foreground to the outer fringe of the abbey quarter.

It is the abundance of ancient half-timbered houses conspicuous in the sleepy High Street and its continuation under other names along the north front of the mighty abbey that gives Tewkesbury its distinction. I doubt if any town in England can give such a display within so limited a space. Ludlow might if its old houses were more extensively stripped and opened up. But nature has dealt so lavishly with that

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be-castled town on the Teme that it can well afford pre-eminence in this particular to the little town on the Severn. Tewkesbury has been fortunate, too, in the possession of a public-spirited son, who not merely warned off the Philistine, but exposed to the light much old work that here, as elsewhere, had been obscured by vandalistic hands, if we may use such hard words about departed worthies who were merely acting according to their lights. But the late Mr. Collins exhibited the unique combination of a local builder (in a large way) with a knowledge and love of the past, the skill of an architect with the eye of an artist. If Tewkesbury can recall the Tudor and Jacobean period, as I think it can more effectively than almost any English country town, no little of the credit belongs to this public-spirited citizen, and a builder too by calling! For what deplorable associations are too often connected with that trade in our old towns, and what havoc have its followers wrought as Town Councillors! Tewkesbury, to be sure, like other places has its red brick abominations, its frankly modern and utilitarian quarters; but they are not extensive and lie away behind the town towards the station, which last, by the way, is the terminus of a small branch from the main line between Worcester, Cheltenham, and Gloucester, that passes two miles away. This aloofness possibly intensifies the quiet of Tewkesbury. Unless a big flour mill may count for such, not a speck of industrial disfigurement disturbs the aesthetic atmosphere of its old world calm. The town must have been of considerable importance, however, when the Severn trade was flourishing and the Avon, which was partially canalised by one of the energetic Sandys of Ombersley as far back as Queen Elizabeth's time, also contributed traffic from Evesham and Stratford.

But if the commercially restless have ever had hopes for Tewkesbury since those days, they must long have abandoned them. Worcester and Evesham, Cheltenham and Gloucester, all within a dozen to twenty miles, are no doubt too much for its growth as a market or shopping centre. Shopkeepers may

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grumble as they always do in a side-tracked, stagnant old country town, though what they expect it would be ill to say. They should move to the Black country if they want something more commercially stimulating. The limitations of such places as Tewkesbury are after all so obvious. Within their limits they are useful and reasonably prosperous and fulfil all that the country expects of them in the rôle of a rural town. If more people can be put on to the land and incidentally provide more customers for the country town well and good—but that is another thing. Why, however, such places should be restive because they continue to cover the same amount of ground and the population remains stationary is a mental attitude, and an extremely common one, by the way, among patriotic aldermen and others, that passes all understanding. Tewkesbury is not likely to be spoilt for the artist or the antiquary. Whatever the grocer and the draper may think it wears a cheerful and well cared for mien. Moreover, it is often on summer days lively enough with visitors to the town and abbey, from the decorous motorist armed with a guide-book to the bean-feaster refreshing himself at one or other of its picturesque hostelries in the intervals of a joy ride.

Among the number of half-timbered houses that so greatly adorn the main thoroughfares there is a good sprinkling of Queen Anne and Georgian fronts. As regards the first they are to a large extent shops or inns and from that fact the more accessible to the curious. No particular historical associations, so far as I know, belong to any of these ancient houses, except a tradition that in one of the oldest, in part at least of the fifteenth-century date and now a confectioner's shop, Prince Edward was slain after the battle of Tewkesbury, of which anon. Indeed blood-stains are still pointed out on the floor of one of the upper rooms as evidence of the tragedy. The tradition can be traced back so far into the past that it may possibly have some truth in it. It was associated with another of less material significance which held that precisely at midnight, on every seventh of May, a funeral procession

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passed out of the door, the bell of the abbey church tolling mysteriously the while. Another half-timbered house conspicuous for its beauty faces that open space still known as The Cross, and was restored and inhabited by Mr. Collins himself. This is thought to have been the residence of the ancient Lords of Tewkesbury. But a mere catalogue of these old houses would be tiresome and purposeless. There are many others more or less intact in the wynds and lanes between the main street and the Avon, one of which belonged to the artist Turner who inherited it from his father. Both were on the voting lists as burgesses, though the latter alone appears to have ever lived here.

Tewkesbury town grew up around the castle and abbey. Of the castle there is nothing left and even Leland found only the foundations. It was the inheritance and no doubt occasionally the seat of those mighty men and women who, beginning with Fitzhamon, the Conqueror's friend, succeeded one another in the great Earldom of Gloucester and Honour of Glamorgan. But in the end of the seventh century there was some sort of a rude church planted here by a Saxon missionary named Theocus, to whom, in fact, the town owes its name. This grew into a monastery which by the ninth century was important enough to receive the remains of Brihtric, King of Mercia. He was poisoned by his wife and preceded to the grave by quite a number of his friends, whom this subtle and malignant lady had despatched in the same fashion. In the tenth century the Saxon monastery was connected with the Benedictine House of Cranbourne. Probably, as situated in such an accessible spot, it was often ravaged by the Danes, but very little seems known about its fortunes till it passed at the Conquest into Norman hands. The manor then belonged to that other Brhitric of Hanley Castle whose fate at the hands of William's revengeful queen I trust the reader will remember.

The Conqueror made his old friend Fitzhamon Earl of Gloucester, and Tewkesbury having been grabbed, as we have

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seen, at the Queen's instigation, was given to the Earldom later on by William Rufus and formed its northern fringe. Fitzhamon and Roger de Montgomery, with whom we came in contact so frequently in Shropshire, may be classed together, not merely as being perhaps the foremost of the Conqueror's men but as both having the Welsh to deal with on their borders. As Fitzhamon founded the abbey and lies buried there it will be not amiss to remind the reader how great and outstanding a man he was. For not satisfied with his powerful Earldom, he got permission from William Rufus to adventure in Wales, still at that time an almost inviolate country, and just such a favourite field of enterprise with the ambitious Anglo-Norman as Ireland became in later days. Fitzhamon, taking advantage of the quarrel of two Welsh princes, laid hold of Glamorgan, the garden of Wales. The story of how he divided all the best of it between twelve knights who assisted in the conquest is a very romantic one, unhappily not relevant here. But the remains of many of these castles can be seen to this day, including that of Cardiff which he kept for himself, at the same time retaining the overlordship of the whole province. This was henceforward attached to the Earldom of Gloucester, thereby giving it a strength and importance above any other of that day. Fitzhamon's headquarters were at Gloucester itself, though, as already noted, he had a house of some sort here at Tewkesbury. At any rate, he and his were laid in the abbey for generations, and, as among the mightiest of the Norman conquerors, he may fairly be called the *genius loci* of ancient Tewkesbury. He fell in battle upon foreign soil in 1097 but not before the monastery and church were in a condition to receive sixty monks transferred thither from Cranbourne, which thenceforward became a cell to Tewkeskury. The abbey church was completed and dedicated with great pomp and ceremony in the year 1123.

Fitzhamon leaving no son, his daughter Isobel, the greatest heiress of her day in England, was in due course bestowed by the then reigning monarch, Henry I, on Robert, his natural son

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by his ward, the beautiful Nesta, daughter of Rhys ap Tudor, Prince of South Wales. This lady, afterwards wife of Gerald de Windsor, constable of Pembroke, is known in Cambrian history as the "Helen of Wales" and with good reason, for rivers of blood were shed on her behalf, to the west of the Severn. A good story is told by the chroniclers about the haughty Isobel, who apparently was not over-pleased at espousing a bastard, even though the offspring of two Royal stocks. She objected to uniting her name and fortune with a man devoid of a patronymic and merely known as "Robert"; above all, since he was marrying her, she declared, for what she had, and not for what she was. He was undoubtedly the younger of the pair, and ought at least to provide himself, so she insisted, with some more dignified appelation. This was simple enough and the youth adopted the obvious and came forward as Robert Fitz-le-Roy. But this canny young woman was not yet quite satisfied and insisted before going any further on knowing what title her eldest son was to bear. On being informed that he would undoubtedly be Robert, Earl of Gloucester, she withdrew all objections and intimated that matters might be proceeded with.

Her husband, as a man of might and influence at any rate, proved an entire success. He became the most powerful baron in England and among other things stood stoutly and loyally by his half-sister, Matilda, in Stephen's wars. Above all, so far as we are concerned, he completed the abbey. Some generations later the great House of Clare succeeded to the Earldom of Gloucester and Lordship of Tewkesbury, and for nearly a century made it a power in the land. Indeed, no family of their time approached them in influence. Most of them were buried at Tewkesbury beneath magnificent monuments that have unhappily vanished. The last of the Clares fell at Bannockburn, the victim of rash and headlong valour on that disastrous day. An heiress for the fourth time carried the honours, and on this occasion to Hugh Despencer, the favourite of the fatuous Edward II. For nearly a century

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the Earldom remained in their family, an important epoch for the abbey, as it was now that the nave in part and the choir almost entirely were rebuilt.

In 1414, the male line ran out again, and through Isobel, sister of the last Earl, the title and estates passed to the Beauchamps, Earls of Warwick, already possessed of several manors on the Severn. It was with their only son, the next Earl, that the weak, young Henry VI became so infatuated, conferring on the perhaps equally foolish lad the further preposterous title of "King of the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands". He dying young, Warwick the king-maker succeeded, and he falling on Barnet field, his daughter, another Isobel (the limitations of the Norman aristocracy in this matter of names is remarkable), had Tewkesbury alone as her share, which, by her marriage with the ill-fated Duke of Clarence, passed soon afterwards to the Crown. So much for the mighty dead, or some of them, whose pageants in life, and pompous funerals at death, have so often in the days of yore illuminated these stately aisles.

The monastery, including its glorious church, was condemned by the King's Commissioners at the Dissolution as "superfluous". The egregious Henry, not satisfied with laying hands on its large revenues, proceeded to sell the materials of the building piecemeal. To save the church, the Tewkesbury folk had to put their hands in their pockets, and pay blackmail to the tune of £550 to this pillar and protector of their faith, and ever since that time it has served as the parish church. Many parishes in England have been fortunate in inheriting in whole or part, mostly the latter, some great abbey or priory church. I can recall, however, none at once so splendid and complete as this one. In the minor matter of environment, too, everything is propitious. A screen of tall limes and a beautifully kept umbrageous graveyard divide its long northern front from the limits of the old town it so imposingly dominates. Southward, it looks down upon the open country, and it is this view of it from the Gloucester

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road, as you approach the town, which more than all others should be sought out. I once spent a warm summer month in Tewkesbury, and I always think of it, no doubt unreasonably, as the hottest place in England; but I like to remember the abbey as I last saw it, and that, too, quite recently, from this very vantage-point. It was not then summer-time; on the contrary, it was the much-abused month of November. But very occasionally there comes a day or two, in its first week, Indian summer days in fact, that light up the richer types of landscape with a glory all their own. The lower Severn is, I think, peculiarly susceptible to late autumn lights. The radiancy of the rich meadows and rolling pastures, the warm colouring of the red soil, which the plough of autumn has exposed in ruddy patches over the wide landscape, the golden tops of the elms, the saffron glories of ash and lime make effective foreground contrasts to the sharp, pale blue heights of the Malverns on the one side, and the immense sweep of the Cotswolds upon the eastern verge.

Often as I had seen it from all points in summer-time, summer memories are almost effaced by that of this noble legacy of the old Marcher Barons on that radiant November afternoon. The westering sun shone full upon the warm stone of its massive tower and huge nave, upon the golden fringe of foliage, dashed with the deep green splashes of yew or cedar, out of which it sprang; upon the group of old black-and-white or thatch-roofed houses, that from this point appear to nestle so felicitously upon the meadows' edge, outside the precincts. There is of a truth little in this approach to the abbey, at half a mile or more away, to destroy the illusion that time has stood still since the townsmen saved their church from destruction at the Royal hands of the avaricious Bluebeard and his gang. Three centuries later, a portion of the old monastic property, known as the abbey house estate, was re-purchased by the parish for £10,000, raised like the other by private subscription, but in this case with more equity in the bargain. Upon it, save for a still extant gateway, stood almost the only

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surviving relic of the monastery, the abbot's dwelling, or a portion of it, which fine old house now does appropriate duty as the present vicarage.

The church is Cruciform, with a central tower of massive Norman work, unsurpassed in England, and some 150 feet high. It is profusely arcaded, contains three tiers of windows, and is surmounted by later pinnacles. This addition is due to the fact that at one time the tower carried a lofty spire, which fell with a crash on Easter Sunday during service, in the year 1559. As regards the exterior, the Norman west front ranks with the tower for the glory of Tewkesbury. The arch is a seven-fold one, and 63 feet high, nearly three-fourths of it being filled by a Perpendicular window, which replaced a former one, destroyed by a storm. There is also an unusually large north porch surmounted by a parvise. On entering the west door, the effect is singularly striking, from the great length of the nave arcade, and the splendid vista formed by its massive, and exceptionally high Norman pillars, which terminate in semi-circular arches, and a beautifully vaulted roof of the Decorated period. The ribs supporting this last spring from sculptured heads on the capitals of the pillars, while the bosses at the intersections are beautifully carved figures. The nave aisles are at a much lower elevation, but have also groined roofs, with some good bosses, and are lighted by handsome pointed windows of the fourteenth century. At the east end of either aisle are monuments, dubiously identified as the Duke of Somerset and Lord Wenlock, who fell in the great battle here, of which anon.

Both transepts are Norman, except as in the case of the nave, for their roof, and windows. Adjoining the south transept is a small Norman apsidal chapel, with a chamber above, which was approached from the infirmary of the monastery, and used by sick monks. The termination of the north transept, originally a duplicate of its fellow, has been much altered through the ages, but at the Dissolution it consisted of two chapels, which were used as a grammar school, till con-

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verted, in recent times, into a choir vestry. The change from the massive, sombre dignity of the Norman nave to the mainly fourteenth-century choir is very marked. The Norman pillars have been shortened, and support pointed arches, while the stained glass is mainly of contemporary date. These windows represent scriptural subjects, but on two the several benefactors of the abbey are portrayed. The original stonework of the windows is attributed to the Despencers, but has been a good deal restored: likewise the stained glass, and none too successfully. But this is of less consequence, when weighed against the historical value of the subjects illustrated. As more or less contemporary likenesses of the Clares, Despencers, and other illuminati, with whom the fortunes of the great abbey are linked, the value is problematical enough no doubt —but for the armour and costumes here depicted, it is very great. Still more, perhaps, are they to be treasured for the armorial bearings which have so greatly assisted to the understanding of their complicated relationships.

The floor of the choir has been relaid with tiles, partly old ones unearthed at the Restoration, filled in with replicas mainly of heraldic design, and indicating the great baronial houses whose dead repose beneath them. The same idea was carried out in preserving the names of those whose remains were identified during the recent investigations. A brass has been placed beneath the tower where the young Prince Edward of Wales, slain at the battle of 1471, was by repute interred. The north transept is nearly filled by the organ; but the thirteenth-century chapel adjoining it, already spoken of as having been used for a grammar school, has been considerably opened out and much good old work revealed. It was for long miscalled the chapter house, but is now thought to have been a Lady chapel for the use of the laity. It contains fine clustered pillars of freestone and Purbeck marble, and a good deal of the arcading of the walls with other detail is preserved. An ambulatory runs round the choir, out of which various chapels open, those of St. Margaret, St. Edmund, St. Faith,

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and the reputed grave of Brhitric, King of the West Saxons, besides two others, one of an abbot containing his altar tomb and the other serving as a vestry. In the latter are some old swords from the battlefield. By St. Margaret's chapel is the tomb with effigy of Sir Guy de Brian, the standard bearer at Crecy. A room above, reached by a spiral staircase, is known as the monks' chamber. There are also in the ambulatory many stone coffins and tombs of known and unknown ecclesiastics, as well as the Trinity chapel built to the memory of Edward Lord de Spencer (d. 1375) by his wife. The deceased is quaintly portrayed on the roof in an attitude of prayer.

The Warwick chapel in the north arcade of the choir, for perfection of finish and workmanship, is regarded as one of the finest specimens of its kind in England. It was erected by Isobel Despencer to her first husband, Richard Beauchamp, who for his courageous conduct at Agincourt was created Earl of Worcester, and was ultimately killed by a cannon ball, leading his men at the siege of Meaux in 1421. A partly legible inscription on a band of the screen commemorates the founder, though he himself was buried elsewhere in the church. Close to the arch which gave entry to the lady chapel, demolished, by the way, at the Dissolution by a greedy commoner named Hawkins, who no doubt sold the materials, is the entrance to the vault where the Duke of Clarence of wine-butt celebrity and his wife were buried.

Chief of all, however, in historical interest is the Founder's chapel, which encloses the tomb of the Great Fitz-Hamon himself. This vault was pillaged at the Dissolution and the contents carried away. About 1710 the place once occupied by these royal and mighty dead was annexed by a Tewkesbury burgher, one Hawling, who caused himself and his family to be laid therein. Some eighty years ago, however, the remains of Clarence and his wife having been conjecturally discovered, the commoner clay was ejected, and transferred to a more modest resting-place in favour of the Norman bones, which were restored. Erected in 1397 by Abbot Parker, it contains

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an exquisite ceiling of fan-work tracery and much floriated decoration. A brass depicting the founder was extant not so very long ago bearing an inscription. A few other mural monuments with effigies remain, as memorials of that great feudal aristocracy which ruled upon the banks of Severn and made history on both sides of the English channel. Few provincial churches cover so much illustrious dust, or for that matter, such a lavish display of beautiful workmanship erected in its honour. For that many tombs were destroyed by the shameless Philistines of the Dissolution and the part-plunderers, part-fanatics of the civil wars was proved beyond a doubt in the excavations consequent on the restoration work thirty odd years ago.

Careful search was then made beneath the chancel floor, resulting in the discovery of many fragments of painted and sculptured remains, as is supposed, of the reredos. Among them were portions of the figure of that great Earl Robert, who married, as will be remembered, Isobel, the canny and inquisitive heiress of Fitzhamon. William, Earl of Gloucester, was similarly identified, so also were Gilbert de Clare, the Red Earl, and Thomas Despencer. Part of the figure, too, of that other Gilbert de Clare who fell at Bannockburn was found, holding in his hand an inverted torch in attestation that the male line of his House died with him. The vault beneath the Despencers' monuments was explored, and revealed the body of Hugh, the third of the line, in a leaden coffin. Close to it was the perfect skeleton of the Lady Despencer who died in 1350, while the bones of many of the De Clares, including the Bannockburn hero, which in his case were those of a six-foot man, were all found in their proper places. The most interesting discovery of all, however, was the embalmed body of Isobel Despencer, mentioned above as wife of that Beauchamp who fell in France in 1421. The shroud was intact with the lady's right arm and hand protruding from it. The body was apparently well preserved, and through an opening in the wrappings above the face a profusion of auburn hair was

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visible. A unique possession of the church, standing between the south transept and the choir, is an old organ built in the year 1637 for Magdalen College, Oxford. It was removed by Cromwell to Hampton Court where Milton is supposed to have made use of it. Returned at the Restoration to Magdalen, it was purchased by Tewkesbury in 1736. Even now it is occasionally used, but has been much renovated at various times. As a last word on this beautiful building, in this case as glorious without as within, it should be mentioned that the restoration some forty years ago was carried out by Sir Gilbert Scott.

Facing the north entrance of the abbey is the Bell Inn, one of the many treasures of Tewkesbury, in old black-and-white architecture and, I might add, one of the chief resorts of the hungry and thirsty pilgrim. Behind it is an old and bowery bowling green, and just beyond is the Avon with the old abbey mill, its wheel still hard at work, and the water pouring in lively fashion into a wide, heaving pool. Tewkesbury is the fictitious scene of *John Halifax, Gentleman*, a work of repute in the mid-Victorian period, and, if the world has forgotten it, the Tewkesbury cicerone has not, as the perhaps slightly-bored visitor will quickly discover. A medallion tablet to the authoress, Mrs. Craik, was placed some years ago in the abbey, and I have no doubt that to some people it is much more interesting than the chantry of Fitzhamon or the beautiful effigies of the Despencers. Indeed, a verger once told me it was much more popular, as I can well believe. I suppose it is a shameless admission, but even the inspiring atmosphere of Tewkesbury itself failed to carry me successfully to the end of this rather tiresome story, particularly as the authoress had no special connection with the place, and its selection as the scene of the book seems to be more or less fortuitous. This, and two rather later works of fiction, apparently of the Harrison Ainsworth type, dealing with local history and the like, and written by a clergyman, supply the local handbooks with much irrelevant padding. It

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really does seem rather bathos, in a place where every stone breathes history in its most dramatic sense for those that have ears to hear its messages, to be continually informed that this house or that village is immortalised (*sic*) by some pages or passages in recent and quite undistinguished fiction.

Though Tewkesbury was the constant scene of small actions in the civil wars, and as an open town was taken and lost by either side an astonishing number of times, it is the great concluding battle of the long Wars of the Roses that stands out above aught else in its story. Shakespeare has helped, no doubt, to keep its memory green in the public mind. Nor are his inspired pages the less effective when one may fairly assume that as a native of the district he must have known men who had heard the tale of the fight from those who were actually in it or had witnessed it. The battle of Tewkesbury was only decisive in that it secured the crown to Edward IV for the rest of his life. Unlike Bosworth Field which, in the next reign, upset everything and established the Tudors with all therein implied, it had no epoch-making significance. It settled the fate, however, of the brave Margaret of Anjou, as well as that of her wretched husband and hapless son and a host of Lancastrian lords. Having regard to the rapid and frequent changes of fortune which distinguished the Wars of the Roses, no apology will be needed for reminding the reader that Edward, after some years on the throne, suddenly fled the country before the re-appearance from France of Warwick, the king-maker, who had some time previously gone over to the opposition. This was in October, 1470. In March, Edward was back again with sufficient popularity and following to occupy London. In April he met Warwick and the Lancastrians at Barnet and annihilated them. On the same day Queen Margaret and her son, who had been prevented by weather from coming earlier to share the brief triumph of her party, landed at Weymouth. It was a dismal prospect, but at Beaulieu she was visited by the Lancastrian chiefs of the western country,

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and, further encouraged by the Tudor interest, which was raising a force in Wales, it was decided to make one more effort to retrieve their cause.

Somerset and a few other Lancastrian leaders who had escaped from the field of Barnet were Margaret's advisers and supporters, and Exeter was named as the trysting-place. Thither the Queen, with her son Edward, now repaired, and in a short time the western counties had rallied to her standard in tolerable force, while the Earl of Pembroke was collecting another body of men in South Wales. Prince Edward, now about eighteen, was the nominal, Somerset the actual leader of the army. The plan of campaign was for the two forces to unite on the Severn, in the neighbourhood of Gloucester, march thence into the northern counties and there raise further Lancastrian levies before turning upon Edward. The latter, in due course, got tidings of these fresh efforts of his enemies. He was not a man to lose time, but he was delayed some days on this occasion by an impression cleverly created by Somerset that the Lancastrians intended to move on London.

The Queen's army marched from Exeter, by Wells, to Bath, where they heard that the King was already at Malmesbury. Turning north, with a view to the expected junction with Pembroke, they entered Bristol, and were there well supplied and slightly reinforced. Hastening up the Severn to Gloucester, with the intention of crossing over to the west bank of the river, they found the gates of the city shut in their faces. Pushing on up stream, and either failing to find or fearing to attempt, under the circumstances, any of the fords which then existed, they found themselves, on 3rd May, close to Tewkesbury. No Pembroke had as yet appeared and Edward was already at Cheltenham, only nine miles away, so there was no alternative but to choose their ground and await his attack. The battlefield lies in the meadows, through which the Gloucester road now runs, and about a mile from Tewkesbury, to the south of and a little

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higher than the town. A small pre-historic camp, now shaded by a group of elms, is said to mark the actual spot where the Queen and her son made their headquarters on the night of 3rd May. All around, with their backs towards Tewkesbury and facing the rich woody plain at the end of which Cheltenham lies so snugly beneath the high wall of the Cotswolds, lay the Lancastrian army.

The King had pushed on from Cheltenham, then but a small village, and encamped his army in the meadows, some three miles from his opponents. With him came Clarence, who had so lately abjured the Warwick alliance and fought on the Yorkist side at Barnet, and also his own brother, Richard, if but a youth in years, a very man in action. Among others at his side were Lord Hastings and his stepson, through the Woodville marriage, which had cost him so dear, Thomas Grey, Earl of Dorset.

It was on the eve of battle here that Shakespeare puts the stirring address to her supporters into the mouth of the courageous Queen. Buffeted for weeks as she had been at sea the metaphor of a bark struggling with the tempest is characteristic of the poet's adroitness at seizing a situation :—

"What though the mast be now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding-anchor lost
And half our sailors swallowed in the flood?
Yet lives our pilot still! Is't meet that he
Should leave the helm, and like a fearful lad
With tearful eyes add water to the seas?

We will not from the helm to sit and weep,
But keep our course, though the rough wind say no,
From shelves and rocks that threaten us with wreck.
As good to chide the waves as speak them fair.
And what is Edward but a ruthless sea?
What Clarence but a quicksand of deceit?
And Richard but a ragged fatal rock?

Of the Lancastrian army the Duke of Somerset and his brother John Beaufort led the van, Prince Edward and Lord

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Wenlock the centre, while the Earl of Devon commanded the rearguard. The Yorkists opened the battle with their artillery which was posted on a slightly higher ridge easily recognisable to-day from *Queen Margaret's camp*.

The Lancastrians seem to have been more or less intrenched and awaited the attack, which was led by Richard and met staunchly and successfully by Somerset's corps. The wily Yorkist then tried the old familiar ruse of feigning flight, which once more met with the proverbial success. For the defenders, pouring out of their intrenched position in pursuit, found themselves counter-attacked with a vigour that utterly discomfited them, and drove them headlong towards the Severn, where in a field still called "the bloody meadow," and marked by a row of willows, they were slaughtered in prodigious numbers. Somerset with a few followers escaped the common fate and found his way to the centre division. But instead of joining battle with it he fell into loud and unmeasured abuse of Lord Wenlock for not supporting him, called him "coward" and "traitor" and finally drawing his sword clave his skull in twain. This shocking exhibition was not calculated to put heart into troops with probably none too much ardour for the fight. And at this moment they were attacked with great resolution by the King himself and before very long the remainder of the Lancastrian army was scattered in a disordered straggling flight.

Most fled towards the town and abbey with Edward's destroying soldiers on their heels. At a mill pool by the town, says the chronicler, many were drowned—no doubt that same pool on the Avon below the abbey mill, already alluded to. Most of the notables among the fugitives sought refuge in the abbey, assuming no doubt that it possessed the right of sanctuary, which would seem, however, to have been an act of misplaced confidence. For the avenging Edward and his people were met at the entrance by a priest bearing the consecrated elements who warned him against defiling the church with deeds of blood. Whereupon, say the Lancastrian

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chroniclers, the King granted them their lives. This was on a Saturday and a thanksgiving service for the victory was immediately celebrated with great pomp. Among the many nobles slain upon the field of battle the Yorkist writers number Prince Edward. The Lancastrians, however, declare that he found refuge, as we have already had occasion to mention, in a house in the town, and that the King offered a large reward to any one who would produce the prince dead or alive, and further, that in case of the latter being accomplished the lad's life should be spared. Sir Richard Crofts then brought him out "a fayre and well proporcioned young gentleman". After some bitter recriminations on the King's part, concluded with a cuff, and replied to in manly fashion by the Prince, Clarence, Richard of Gloucester, Grey and Hastings, who were standing by, cruelly murdered him, and his body, as we have seen, was buried in the abbey church. Such is the Lancastrian story.

In the meantime Sunday seems to have passed off quietly. But the next morning the lust of blood returned. The more distinguished prisoners were dragged from the abbey and still undiscovered hiding-places in the town and arraigned before the Duke of Gloucester as Constable of England and the Duke of Norfolk as Earl Marshal. A few were pardoned, but, regardless of the King's promise, about five-and-twenty were executed upon a scaffold erected at the Cross in Tewkesbury, and for the most part found sepulture in the abbey church. The Earl of Devon, Lord John Beaufort, and a great number of knights and squires had died on the field. The unfortunate Margaret in the meantime was discovered three days after the battle, in a countryman's house to which she had been hurriedly conveyed across the Severn by two priests. A strong tradition points to an old half-timbered house in Bushley parish named Payne's place, which is known to have been built in 1460; while a chamber in it has been immemorially known as "the Queen's room". Thence she was sent to London, and as a widow retained there for many

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years till her father paid her ransom and enabled her to spend the close of her stormy life in her own country.

The neighbourhood of Tewkesbury, both to the east and west of the Severn, is lavish in idyllic villages, little touched, or if so, but tenderly touched, by modern innovaters. To the west in the Herefordshire direction, a charmingly sequestered and broken country spreads up to the most southerly and lower heights of the Malverns, which at this extremity are climbed by the road from Tewkesbury to Eastnor and Ledbury, a delightful and secluded region of hill and dale, with far reaching commons of heath and fern, remnants of the ancient chase. Black-and-white is the style that chiefly makes for beauty in village and grange upon this western side. Going eastward, however, from the town, the beautiful Cotswold stone and the no less alluring architectural style of the old Cotswold builders begin to assert themselves. All about here, indeed, where a little back from the east bank of the Severn, up the Avon valley and along the slopes of the Cotswold hills the two styles intermingle, may, for this very reason perhaps, fairly claim supremacy over any part of England in the matter of village architecture. Indeed, this whole country about the lower Severn and Wye, otherwise the counties of Worcester, Gloucester and Hereford, together with portions of their immediate neighbours, whether in the stone or half-timbered districts or in those that are a blend of both, easily surpass any other portion of the Kingdom in the high æsthetic standard of their villages and small towns. The Devon village, so constantly idealised as something special in this way by writers insufficiently familiar with their own country, is a myth. There are plenty of normally picturesque thatched villages to be found in that delectable county but the typical village over most of Devon stands around its church upon a bare hill-top, and displays a marked partiality for slate roofs and unredeemed white-wash. For sheer abundance of old-fashioned thatched cottages South Wilts stands, I think, alone. But, as in the Dorset or Devon cottages of this type,

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THE SEVERN, BELOW TEWKESBURY

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there is too often a suggestion of squalor and poverty in the low walls that carry the straw roofs. And though quaint enough in their rude simplicity, they are not often comparable to the unconsciously artistic and more homelike black-and-white, or the rich and often carved stone of the West Midlands and the Welsh Marches. Broadly speaking, the stone-flagged roof prevails over thatch among the old houses to the east of the Severn, while on the western side the proportions are reversed.

Tewkesbury stands at a point where the counties of Gloucester and Worcester meet, but with singularly ragged edges and disregard of natural boundaries. Both counties fling fragments across the Severn or Avon promiscuously, while to the eastward confusion becomes worse confounded. For no longer satisfied with dove-tailing attenuated parishes one into the other along the base of the Cotswolds, Worcester claims various "islands" anchored about in the territory of Gloucester and even of Warwick—silent witnesses to the diocesan, monastic, or baronial jealousies of olden days. Worcestershire is indeed the greatest sinner of all English counties in this respect, a fact probably accounted for by the territorial supremacy of the Church with its quiet acquisitiveness in all directions. Dudley, for instance, is a Worcestershire island in Staffordshire, and though we have nothing to do with this here, nor yet the eccentricities that confront one along the Cotswolds, it will be less parenthetical to note that Worcestershire had the audacity to throw a long narrow finger across the top of the Malvern hills into the Hereford low country. Some of these inconsequent vagaries have, I believe, been recently rectified. Whether these islanders regard themselves as colonies of the mother county, and like most colonies have a double dose of patriotism, or whether they feel their isolation merely as an inconvenience, which indeed it must be, I do not know.

But, returning to the Severn, it is interesting to remember that its great rival, the Thames, has its birth in the very hills

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that bound the last reaches of the western river where it meets the tide. The wonderful variety, the contrast racial, scenic, and architectural that lie almost side by side in this little island of ours are nowhere better exhibited than in the two rivers and their valleys. Colouring, altitude, formation, homesteads, cottages, churches, sheep, cattle, men and women, character, ancient tradition, everything is different. Yet from these same Cotswolds you can see the end of one river and the beginning of the other! The Thames and its tributaries lack distinction of birth. They are born under hedgerows, beside high roads, within sound of the clatter of village children and the rattle of turnpikes or railroads—anywhere in fact. They emerge at once into civilisation and remain sociable rivers till the end. The Thames is indeed by far the most sociable river in England. From its upper waters to London aquatic gaiety of every description is a feature of its pleasant course. Villages and towns whose very names, even to those who never saw them, are redolent of racing, tubbing or punting, of picnics, houseboats, and launches, cluster thick upon its banks. The bright flare of parasol or blazer is inseparable from its summer aspect. It is beyond doubt the gayest river from first to last in the world. No grim fragments of baronial castles frown down upon its silver tides. They would indeed be utterly out of place. The "old, far-off, unhappy things" that made for the past story and the present atmosphere of the Severn valley, if you can feel them, are practically absent from the Thames. It has altogether another sort of story as it has to-day altogether another atmosphere.

The Severn, on the other hand, is of right noble birth. Nor are any of her tributaries but the Avon born in ditches. Like herself they come of lofty origin among whirling clouds and calling curlews. To continue the metaphor, Sabrina as she rolls their mingled tides along, touched with the reddish stain of her sandy bed, cultivates from first to last a certain moody exclusiveness. Seldom enough, as we have seen, is she a sociable river. Robbed long ago of her picturesque com-

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mercial traffic by sail and oar and the song and shouts of the innumerable boatmen who were ever passing back and forth upon her waters, there is a touch of almost pathos in the silence of those many-mile reaches, rarely broken but by the plunge of a fish or the swish of the current among the trailing boughs of the dwarf willows that fringe the foot of her high red tufty banks.

The Thames above London, again, unlike the Severn above Gloucester, was never a boundary of first-rate importance; not one at any rate that has had appreciable influence in English life. "North and south of the Thames" is an expression one occasionally hears, to be sure: but it means almost nothing and at no time above London could have had any very serious significance. But most things came and many things still come to a stop on the east bank of the Severn. The British Cornivii found in it their boundary and took no part so far as we can find in the great stand of the Silures beyond the river. The Saxon Hwiccas, who, breaking away from the West Saxons, first occupied, speaking roughly, what are now the counties of Worcester and Gloucester, never crossed it till they were merged in the great kingdom of Mercia whose ambition knew no bounds but the sword. In the middle ages dense forests along the river's western bank helped it to divide the Welsh fighting Border Saxons, the trained archers and spearmen, from the men whose rank and file knew nothing about Welsh raids nor much about fighting at all. When later on, the Percies, Edmund Mortimer and Owen Glyndwr met in secret at Aberdaron on the furthest strand of Carnarvonshire and by compact divided England and Wales between them, the Welshmen's third share fell naturally to "everything west of the Severn". From Bridgnorth downwards it still divides the Welsh Borders from the West Midlands. The more or less Midland accent gives way across the river to the Welsh lilt of the Salopian. Here at Tewkesbury the unmistakable and peculiar intonation of the Avon valley, the western Cotswolds and the Cheltenham-Gloucester region,

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gives way beyond the river to the Herefordian Welsh lilt which is still more "sing-songy" than that of the Salopians. In another and quite different sense the Severn valley exhibits a contrast from that of the Thames as complete probably as could be furnished by any two long strips of rural England. Outside its famous towns, the latter, in a social sense, long ago, and from obvious causes, virtually broke with its past. Beautiful seats overlook it, exquisite gardens dip to its brimming banks, famous men and women are linked in memory with this spot or with that, but for the most part as comparitively transient folk and not as genuine sons and daughters of the soil. Few Thames-side estates or country seats have much hereditary significance. Its atmosphere in this sense is essentially of to-day and yesterday, cosmopolitan, non-provincial. But all down the Severn, since the days of the Tudors, the ancient stocks have clung to its banks with a tenacity that is rare anywhere in this ever-shifting balance of English social life.

As regards Shropshire, our earlier chapters will have sufficiently revealed how things are there; and nearly everywhere along the Worcestershire Severn the same tale is told. Dudleys, Blunts, Sandys, Beauchamps, Lechmeres, Hornyolds, Coventrys, Dowdeswells, Bromleys, Martins, and one or two others, still sit above the river where their ancestors sat from three to five centuries ago, and join hands together along its banks in a rarely interrupted ownership. Some readers may think this kind of thing in no way unusual. For myself, I can call to mind no other such felicitous example of long continuance on such a big scale. It is the more remarkable, too, when one remembers how comparatively near is all this country to the money-making centres of Midland industry. To my mind, a region that in this particular has broken almost wholly with its past, like so many in England, has lost infinitely in interest and approaches the condition of a glorified suburb under more expansive and ambitious conditions of life. In short, from an abstract point of view it is

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extremely dull. I have no doubt that the ancient baronage —what time these Tudor upstarts, lawyers, yeomen, iron founders, woolstaplers, were founding families all over the country—regarded the process as something much worse than dull. Indeed, we know very well what the survivors of the Wars of the Roses thought of it all.

No sojourner at Tewkesbury should fail to take boat and ascend the Avon to Bredon, a matter of three miles of as pleasant paddling as could be wished for. The view up stream of the leafy village with its tapering church spire as you draw towards it up the quiet brimming stream from Twining ferry is wholly charming. For Bredon hill, the presiding genius of the Lower Avon, fills the background most effectively, lifting its thousand feet of mingled wood and pasture from its girdle of picturesque villages to a smooth bare summit. Despite its rounded outlines Bredon hill has dignity and character, if merely for its isolation, rising quite independently of the broken ridges of the Cotswolds on the south and the lower heights which bound the Avon on the north. The atmospheric condition of its summit is the immemorial barometer of the rustic weather prophets from Tewkesbury to Evesham, and the accuracy with which it foretells fair weather and foul to the anxious farmer of the vale is the subject of a well-known local distich. But I have written of all this Avon country elsewhere, and have been only now tempted to glance so far up this most delectable of placid rivers from the fact that its lowest reach to Bredon village is regarded by Tewkesbury as one of its chief attractions, not only for the little water journey itself but for the object of it.

For Bredon has a really fine old church, in large part Norman and containing many beautiful and curious monuments to its ancient lords and their ladies. The village itself, too, has a good store of ancient houses grouped effectively around the church. Strensham, already mentioned as the birth place of "Hudibras" Butler and the ancient stronghold

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of the Russels, lies just across the river; that is to say, the church, its only point of interest, stands there, well lifted up on a wooded ridge above the valley meadows. Here in its chancel are some of the finest marble effigies and brasses in England, all commemorating bygone Russels. A merely curious, but I fancy unique feature of this thirteenth-century church is that the box pews with which it is fitted date from Henry VIII. There are other details worthy of notice, among them a memorial to Samuel Butler, though he was actually buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden. He was also commemorated, I was going to say honoured, by an inscribed monument in Westminster Abbey. But this was erected by a London printer and faithful admirer, shamed at the neglect with which the Court and country had treated the declining years and death of so eminent and high-souled a man. Butler is indeed as much a Severn as an Avon worthy. For this parish in which he was born, a yeoman's son, comprises the sharp angle formed just here by the junction of the two rivers. Moreover, he was educated at Worcester and spent the early years of manhood at Earls-Croome on the Severn as confidential secretary or the like to an active and a prominent J.P. and squire. He afterwards held similiar posts to one or two greater people in other counties and was always held in high esteem for his wit, learning and modesty.

Hudibras was published at the Restoration and delighted the Court as a pungent satire upon the Puritan regime. To most authors fortune would have assuredly come with the fame of it. But Butler seems to have been an indifferent sycophant. He was both proud and sensitive and cared little for money. A good deal fell in his way at first but he appears to have spent most of it in relieving his needy friends from their embarrassments. He was at one time made steward of Ludlow Castle under the president of the Court of Wales and the Marches, and there married a lady of the Herbert connection with some fortune, out of which, however, she or Butler, according to Aubrey, was cheated by knavery. He spent the latter

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part of his life as a widower in Rose Street, Covent Garden, where he died in poverty, though not in actual obscurity, and without sufficient to pay for a decent funeral.

The Abbey was proposed for him, but his friends could not raise the needed funds, so he was quietly buried in his own parish church in Covent Garden. A monument was afterwards placed over his grave inscribed with his friends' estimate of his virtues and character in some lines which unlike most such eulogistic epitaphs in prose or rhyme are terse, illuminating, and bear the stamp of simple truth. Assuredly this fragment of them is boyond criticism:—

> How few, alas! disdain to cringe and cant
> When 'tis the mode to play the sycophant.
> That wit and pride are always dangerous things
> That little faith is due to Courts and Kings.

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CHAPTER XIII

GLOUCESTER

DEERHURST, notable for its part Saxon church, and wholly Saxon chapel, lies some two and a half miles below Tewkesbury, upon the eastern bank of the river, just where the high ground and valley meadow meet, on the edge, that is, of flood mark. You may walk there in normal times, along old Severn's green, tussocky banks; past "The Load," where a barge ferry swings picturesquely back and forth, and has thus swung for centuries, before an old-fashioned inn, set in a grove of tall trees; past nothing more but the quiet fringes of spacious meadow-lands, astir but for a week in June with hay-makers, and betimes in the wilder seasons for more than a week submerged beneath a flood of waters. In dry summer-time, however, the river, now expanding with the added burden of the Avon between its banks, swishes moodily along over its reddish, sandy bottom, so wide and shallow in places, one can understand how it was there were fords even here, before the days of locks and dams. Towering elms and yet older oaks, following some flood ditch or hedgerow along the river's edge, or crossing the flat towards it from the hill foot, give a sense of opulence and dignity to these long, lonely stages of the Severn's seaward journey: and not least so, when a summer wind is ruffling their thousand dark leaves, and rippling over these bright, lush breadths of ripening grass.

Most people, however, walk to Deerhurst by a pleasant footpath over the upland meadows, while those who depend on wheels make the circuit by road, which is five miles.

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Strange to say, this last is the most interesting, for much of it lies along the Gloucester road, which, following the crest of the high ridge that here bounds the Severn valley, provides a really gorgeous outlook over the whole vale of Cheltenham, with the long western line of the Cotswolds on the one hand, and the trans-Severn ranges of the Welsh Marches on the other. There is little else at Deerhurst but the church, the manor farm-house, its orchards, its paddocks, and its fringing woodlands. But this is all in its favour, as a charming haven of repose, an idyllic backwater of rural life, and a treasure house of the Saxon builder. In summer-time it is visited in a quiet way by many people, antiquaries, Americans, motorists with kodaks, young ladies from Cheltenham with easel and paint box. Deerhurst has been fortunate, indeed, in finding a skilled and scholarly interpreter within its gates, and that, too, within quite recent times. For the late Mr. Butterworth, who was vicar here for thirty-five years, brought both zeal, time, money, and a trained mind to illuminate the past of this interesting place, and has given its results to those who care for such things, in accessible literary form.

The church, a portion of it that is, represents the remains of a Saxon monastery, founded as early as the eighth century. Whether the Saxon portion of the church is contemporary with so early a foundation, must remain a matter of doubt, wood, as we know, being the usual material used in these more primitive churches. But in any case, a monastery was already here in 804, for a deed of conveyance still exists, drawn in that same year by Ethelric, son of Ethelward, an Ealdorman in the Hwiccian district of Mercia. This confers certain lands upon Deerhurst monastery, contingent on the burial therein of the benefactor, and the perpetual intercession of its monks for his soul, and that of his father. Our authority thinks that the monastery was ravaged and partly destroyed by the Danes, and it was here, too, that Canute and Edmond Ironside made their arrangement for dividing the kingdom between them. For Florence of Worcester says that this notable conference

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took place "on an island near Deerhurst," otherwise the isle of Oxney, now a meadow.

In 1054, Edward the Confessor stripped Deerhurst of half its revenues for the benefit of his new foundation at Westminster. Indeed, most of the great monastic estates on the Worcestershire Severn were laid under tribute for the same purpose, and right up till the Dissolution, a perennial grievance was cherished towards the Royal Foundation of St. Peter's by the monks of Worcester, Pershore, and Evesham, as an absentee owner who drew big revenues from the district, while, at the same time, being free of all local obligations. For Westminster held no less than 40,000 acres in the county. But this was not all that the Norman-loving Edward perpetrated to the undoing of Deerhurst. For he made over its possessions to the abbey of St. Denis near Paris, which reduced it to the status of an alien priory. When the alien interest in so many English monasteries was suppressed in the fifteenth century, Deerhurst became a cell of Tewkesbury, and at the Dissolution shared its fate.

The present church, as in the case of Tewkesbury, was that of the old monastery, and portions of it actually belong to its Saxon period of relative splendour, independence, and prosperity. The lower half of the tower is the largest block of Saxon work remaining, besides which there are several round-headed doorways of the same period. Inside the church, on the inner wall of the tower, are a double window with unusual gabled tops, a small three-cornered window, and a narrow, round-headed doorway, all of which are probably Saxon. There is also a quite remarkable font of unknown date. The rest of the building, nave, aisles, and chancel, are of Early English or later work. The church was once, however, much larger, the present chancel occupying the place of the old choir, while the presbytery, which extended beyond it, has disappeared. The priory farm, adjoining the church, and actually attached to it, contains what is left of the residential quarters of the monks, and is a long, low building, rich in ex-

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ternal features, and in its present character of a farmhouse singularly picturesque.

In some ways, however, the most precious survival of this Deerhurst group of buildings, is the very complete Saxon chapel, about a stone's-throw from the churchyard wall, which, strange to say, was only discovered as recently as 1885. It formed part of the buildings of another small holding, known as "the abbot's farm," and till the above-mentioned year, did duty as the farmhouse, but was so plastered over with whitewash, and lumbered up with movables, that its true character had escaped all notice. It was while the building was being converted into two cottages, that the late vicar, happening to be present one day, had his suspicions aroused by the immense thickness of the walls. So, in company with Mr. Collins, the Tewkesbury antiquary and builder already alluded to, a thorough examination was made of the building. Such a happy combination of talent soon discovered that their labours were justified, and in due course a perfect Saxon chapel, with nave and chancel, 46 feet long, was rescued from its centuries of sacrilegious obscurity. The two portions are separated by a rude semi-circular arch, with just a suggestion of the horse shoe in the curve. Outside, on the chapel wall, hitherto obscured by a tree, was discovered an inscribed stone, bearing Latin words signifying, *This altar was dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity*. A facsimile of another inscribed stone, dug up in the adjoining orchard in 1675, and now preserved at Oxford, may be seen in the chapel, and is still more interesting. This reads in English: *Earl Odda had this royal hall built and dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity, for the good of the soul of his brother Elfric, which in this place quitted his body. Bishop Ealdred dedicated it on 12th April, in the 14th year of the reign of Edward, King of the English.* The jambs of the chancel arch are noticeable, being unusually thick, and composed of large blocks laid in irregular long-and-short courses, and the building is entered by a round-headed doorway in the nave. "Oddo, the lover of churches, the

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supporter of the poor, the defender of widows and orphans, the guardian of chastity, having received the monas ic habit a month before his death from Bishop Aldred, died at Deerhurst, but being honourably buried in the monastery of Pershore, rests there." This, says the Worcester chronicle, was in 1054.

A by-road leads from Deerhurst, along the fringe of the Severn meadows, to the first and, indeed, only bridge between Tewkesbury and Gloucester. This is at Apperly, where the river practically touches the foot of the long ridge which bounds the valley upon its eastern side. You may cross the bridge by the main road, if you choose, and pursue the latter along the skirts of the opposing ridge to Gloucester, or you may reject the bridge and follow a fair side-road, along the banks of the river, to where an old and secluded inn, of some apparent pretensions to hospitality, stands near the water—probably a relic of the old navigation days turned to the lighter uses of occasional holiday-makers. Just beyond it, a high, red, brushy cliff, known as Wainload hill, its base washed by the river, strikes an abrupt and unexpected note in the smooth curves, sweeps, and lines that have distinguished the banks of the Severn ever since Worcester was left behind. The by-way, flinching from this obstacle, here leaves the river and climbs gradually up to the village of Norton, planted finely upon the main road which follows the high ridge from Tewkesbury to Gloucester, and, so far at any rate, opens out glorious views, both to the east and to the west, along its whole course. From Norton, you get a fine view of Gloucester, planted five miles away in the flat vale, with the long background of the Cotswolds springing abruptly from the verdant levels, above which the ancient city lifts her spires and towers.

But Ashleworth must by no means be passed over, though it lies upon the opposite bank of the river from the one that has, for the moment, beguiled our steps. For, next to Deerhurst, it is the spot most worthy of note and remembrance

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of any, on this whole stretch of the Severn. It lies nearly opposite Wainload hill, from whose steep screes the river swerves sharply across the meadows to the vale's western slope. If approaching it from this other side, an old-time ferry boat will doubtless answer your shout, and land you actually at Ashleworth church and Court-house farm, which, with their stately screen of elms, not only form a charming riverside picture, but are, furthermore, of great antiquity and structural interest. The church is a blend of styles from Norman to Perpendicular. Indeed, one might extend the limit, since, in the north wall of the nave, the oldest part of the building, there may be seen the finest herring-bone work in Gloucestershire, and quite possibly of Saxon origin. There is a nave with south aisle, a chancel with chapel attached, a north and south porch, and a battlemented tower at the west end, carrying a short spire, while an arcade of four bays divides the nave, of late Norman work, from the south aisle. The chancel is mainly Early English, with walls of remarkable thickness, lighted on the north side by two windows of single and triple lights respectively. The lower part of the tower is a fine specimen of Early Decorated, particularly the west window of two lights, while the upper part is Late Perpendicular. The roof of rather rude construction is mainly Early English work. Nor should a good Jacobean pulpit, and a curious, faded, royal escutcheon of Edward VI be forgotten. The church belonged to the Abbey of St. Augustine in Bristol, and its lay lords were the Pauncefotes, who may be seen lying mail-clad in grim stone effigy in many a church on the Welsh March.

The Court-house, but a stone's-throw from the church, has been a farm homestead for all memorable time. Built in the fifteenth century by the lords of the manor, it has, I think, no particular traditions of occupation by any great family, but is, nevertheless, a most interesting house, though altered a good deal to suit the needs of later days. It is of timber and stonework throughout, and a massive arch over the front door is as

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suggestive, perhaps, of the turbulent period of its construction as any part of it. The upstair rooms are still open to the barn-like raftered roof, and, in the ceiling of the staircase, I noticed two bosses, representing heads, one of which, I was told, was supposed to be the saintly, but unfortunate, Henry VI. Foundations of subsidiary buildings, long vanished, were discovered within recent times, while opening drains. Close by, too, is a noble tithe barn, but little smaller than the famous one at Bredon. It is accounted as about the same date as the Court-house, and is built of clay, with freestone dressings, and roofed with mighty oak timbers, like most of its fellows. A portion of the original oak doors, too, is still *in situ*. A striking group is this trio of ancient buildings, standing, far removed from the village above, in peaceful isolation upon the smooth, green meadow, with its fringe shaded by lofty elms, and lapped by the brimming waters of the Severn, now feeling the first influence of the tides.

Gloucester lies on the left bank of the Severn, and entirely upon the flat. But as the hill country, both upon the east and west, begins to spring from its outskirts, the city presents an undeniably inspiring picture, from many an uplifted point. As a mere composition, from an æsthetic point of view, it appeals to everyone. To those who are happily equipped for seeing with the mind as well as the eye, and can feel the significance of all that this ancient city means in England's story, such a first glimpse of it, as you may get, for example, from the high ground at Norton, will surely touch the chords that respond to such appeals. Distance softens the modern crudities inevitable to a place that has grown of late to a population of 50,000, and one may partly forget them, too, in the great Cathedral, rising in the old heart of the city, and the wide sweep of hill and vale in which both lie entrenched. Standing at the head of seafaring navigation, Gloucester is practically a seaport. For a ship canal evades the curves, and shoals, and sandbanks of the winding and quickly expanding, tidal river, to strike it at

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Sharpness point, some fifteen miles down, where it receives sea-going vessels from the Bristol Channel, and brings them up to the fairly spacious docks near the town. So we might reasonably account our pilgrimage down the Severn to be here completed. Such, at least, was my intention, and, if I ramble a bit beyond Gloucester, it will not be by way of seriously including any part of the estuary within the limits of our subject.

In the first serious Roman invasion of Britain, A.D. 43, Plautius, the Roman general, despatched by the Emperor Claudius, seems to have found a British fortified town on the present site of Gloucester, known by the natives as Caer Glaw, or freely interpreted, the "fair city". Here he founded a Roman station, which under the name of Glevum became a permanent base of Roman power. Plautius and one of his officers married British ladies of the district who appear to have been Christians. For Tacitus states that the General's wife, when he brought her to Rome, was brought to trial for professing that faith. Claudia, a relative of Caractacus, married the Roman officer Pudens, and they had a son named Linus. In later years all three were in Rome, and, curiously enough, were members of St. Paul's intimate circle. In the fourth chapter of the Epistle to Timothy, these three Gloucester worthies are particularly alluded to, "Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Claudia, and Linus, and all the brethren". They are also mentioned by the contemporary poet Martial. It seems rather disconcerting to the generally accepted chronology of the Ancient British church to find Christians on the Severn a few years after the death of Christ. But three such widely sundered authorities as Tacitus, St. Paul, and Martial, can hardly have entered into a conspiracy to delude posterity by references of trifling import to themselves, but perplexingly significant to latter day Englishmen.

There we may leave it, and also perhaps Glevum, till the West Saxons captured it from the Romanised Britons towards the end of the sixth century. It was almost destroyed in these

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wars and ultimately fell into the hands of Penda, but was restored by his son Wolphere, who founded the great monastery of St. Peter's. The city was within the southern bounds of the kingdom of Mercia. A century later, so Bede tells us, it was regarded as one of the noblest cities in the kingdom, and that the next best thing to being a king was to be Earl of Gloucester. The same might truthfully have been said of that proud Earldom in the middle ages. Gloucester suffered the inevitable miseries and shared in the inevitable victories of the successive Danish invasions. But the Norman Conquest found it flourishing, with St. Peter's as a well equipped monastery. William the Conqueror was here constantly. He held several parliaments and celebrated many Christmastides at Gloucester. The church, too, in all the glory of ecclesiastical splendour, here held its synods. The capacity of the city for housing such great and gorgeous beings to their satisfaction, is sufficient evidence of its importance. William himself greatly improved and enlarged it, as well as its monastery. In 1087, during the struggle between William Rufus and his brother Robert, the greater part of Gloucester was destroyed by fire. Like most other cities, too, in that period it suffered not a little from subsequent conflagrations.

Of the successive Earls of Gloucester (and Glamorgan) we said enough at Tewkesbury, where so many of them were buried. When the Earldom came into the reigning family with a son of Edward III, the Royal holders became Dukes, till with Richard III, the title and its valuable accessories lapsed upon the Field of Bosworth. Some brief revivals of the Dukedom in a decorative sense occurred periodically in the Royal family, during the Stuart and Georgian periods, but it represented nothing of the local significance attached to the holders of the mighty Earldom, whose military strength made them so often the dread or the support of Kings.

Henry III was crowned in the abbey at Gloucester, and on several occasions during his harried reign made his headquarters here. The last parliament held in the city was sum-

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moned here by Henry V in 1420. The proudest moment, however, of Gloucester's history is its stubborn resistance for nearly a month in the summer of 1643, to the Royalist forces under the King and Prince Rupert. On being summoned to surrender, and two hours allowed for consideration, Clarendon tells us that the reply was brought by Sergeant Major Pudsey (a Yorkshireman undoubtedly), and Tobias Jordan, a bookseller, whose "lean, pale, sharp, and hard visages at once made the most sour countenances merry and the most cheerful hearts sad, for it was impossible such ambassadors would bring less than a defiance," as it so proved.

The walls were in poor condition, and the King hoped by emptying the moat of water to carry the city by storm. This last achievement proved impossible, for the garrison, though weak in numbers, were stout of heart and were ably seconded by the Puritan element within the walls. So the Royalists proceeded by trench work and a heavy bombardment with guns of all sizes. The citizens, however, repaired the breeches as fast as they were made, the women filling sand bags, while the garrison, from time to time, made bold sallies upon the Royalist works. The defenders burnt 200 houses in the suburbs that would have facilitated the attack, and it is said that they were prepared to burn the city rather than deliver it to their enemies. They ran out of lead and were already firing stones and such like, when on the 26th day of the siege deliverance came in the shape of that army of Londoners, which in its first campaign proved unexpectedly formidable, both on the Cotswolds and later at Newbury. The matter of the siege of Gloucester was, in fact, of vital importance. It proved a turning-point in the war.

Little but a fragment here and there remains of the old wall, and nothing of the moat which once surrounded Gloucester. Though the High-cross which stood in the heart of the city, where the four chief arteries meet, has been long removed, one is still conscious, amid the modern bustle, of the atmosphere of an ancient Cathedral town, and something more. The four

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gates have also gone, but the four streets that led to them, north and south, east and west, still bear their significant names. Fewer old houses are in evidence, perhaps, than in Worcester, but the Cathedral is here more in the heart of the town, and speaking in metaphor, casts its venerable shadow over the roof trees of ancient Gloucester, while its deep toned bells boom out above the traffic. As regards old houses, however, Gloucester may boast of one at any rate, that of its kind has, I believe, no peer in England, and this is the ancient hostelry, somewhat paradoxically known as *The New Inn* in Northgate Street.

It dates back to the fifteenth century and is largely constructed of oak and chestnut timbers, which still exhibit a good deal of their original and beautiful decoration. This is no mere ale-house, for of such there are many as old or older in all parts of the Kingdom. But it still remains as it has always been, one of the principal hotels in the city. This, combined with the fact that it is structurally a quite admirable specimen of a late mediæval hostelry, is what makes for its peculiar distinction. It consists of two courtyards with an open gallery running round them into which the chambers of the first story have access. Most of the rooms retain their ancient features, subject to the requirements of modern times. It was built by a monk for the increasing needs of pilgrims that flocked, incredible though it sounds, to the tomb of Edward II, in the abbey church, later on the Cathedral. There have been kings more actively vicious beyond a doubt, but surely none ever sat on the throne more utterly incapable of realising the ordinary duties and dignities of his position, or of considering anything or anybody but such as his own defective social instincts suggested at the moment. Comfortable only in the society of inferior people, every schoolboy knows how Edward set the kingdom agog by his fatuous choice of favourites, and the preposterous honours he heaped upon them. Popular histories, if memory serves me, have provided this unfortunate monarch with one or more negative virtues. More critical historians

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deny him even this much unless sticking to a disreputable favourite to the very verge of civil war be accounted a merit. Yet after death, though not till the generation which knew him had passed away, the murdered King, by a process inexplicable to us nowadays, became more or less of a saint. And the *New Inn*, thus styled from its inception, stands as a witness to his *post-mortem* popularity in that character. Even the shrewd unspeakable John, lying as conspicuously in the neighbouring fane of Worcester, might have cherished hopes of canonisation and he would have valued the prospect much more than the foolish Edward—if a friendly dagger or cup of poison had peradventure canonised him. The *New Inn* which was the property in pre-Reformation days of the Abbey of Gloucester was left at the Dissolution to the Dean and chapter, and belonged to them till quite recent times. As may be imagined, American guests are generally to be found here in the holiday season.

A word must be said as to the practical and commercial side of Gloucester, because this is, in truth, rather remarkable. For I do not think its name suggests to the average outsider a place of activity and rapid growth. A hundred years ago it was a country town of 8000 souls, and its chief importance lay in its ancient history. To-day the population is 60,000, having almost trebled within my memory, a mere dim and childish recollection this to be sure, of a railway station that held the through passenger captive for long periods, whatever his point of approach, and then despatched him along rather primitive local lines where dismal rural junctions detained him again in their depressing grip. I sometimes pass these places now, contemptuously ignored by speeding trains, and just catch their once fearsome names eloquent to me of tedious hours and cold feet when such things really seemed to matter.

The sea-going trade with the railroad and canal facilities for distributing it in all directions, and the increase of manufacturing enterprise which such advantages encourage are, in brief, the cause of Gloucester's steady progress. This makes

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for extended areas of bricks and mortar upon the flanks of the ancient city that are æsthetically, no doubt, regrettable. But there is a handsome park upon its southern fringe which contains among other things the beautiful county cricket ground, one of the most delectable of all those upon which first class matches are played. Its climate has most assuredly not been an asset in the growth of Gloucester. The native, no doubt, grows up immune from the lassitude that settles down upon the alien sojourner, discourages his activities and tempts him to late breakfasts and days of inglorious ease. I do not imagine that anyone goes to live in Gloucester for the mere fun of the thing. The well-to-do citizens, or at least very many of them, live out at Tuffley, a residential suburb, a mile or so westward, lifted up on the foot of an outlying spur of the Cotswolds. From hence they enjoy delightful views over the city and valley, towards the high ranges of the Welsh border and the long ridges of the forest of Dean.

Larger than Worcester and much larger than Hereford, Gloucester Cathedral is immensely superior to both in the grace and beauty of its exterior. This is due to the fact that, though abounding in much earlier work, that of the Decorated-Perpendicular period, early and late, practically dominates the situation. In short, the first impression is the rather unusual one of a great Cathedral wholly of that style dominated by its beautiful tower which is actually of the fifteenth century. A closer acquaintance, however, will reveal a good deal of Norman and later work, while the interior will be still more suggestive of the original church. The most conspicuous Norman features at a first glance are the two pointed turrets at the end of each transept: otherwise the whole of the rest of the building is embattled. One curious feature must not be forgotten, which in a less beautiful building would be something of a blemish, and that is the much lower elevation of the nave than that of the choir, the central tower intervening between this sharp drop in the roof-line. This, the abbey church of a Benedictine order, was completed in 1058, but

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being more or less destroyed by fire thirty years later was rebuilt and reconsecrated in 1100. Several more fires occurring in that century a fresh dedication seems to have been thought requisite when the damage was repaired in 1237, and St. Peter became its titulary saint.

The present Cathedral consists of a nave with aisles and a south porch, transepts with eastern chapels, a choir with aisles and semi-circular ambulatory opening upon both sides into chapels, and a Cruciform Lady chapel to the east of the ambulatory with a magnificant central tower containing a peal of eight bells in addition to a famous clock-bell known as Great Peter. A chapter-house, a Norman crypt and the most beautiful cloisters in England complete the list. On entering the nave the Norman period at once asserts itself, since of its nine bays all but the two western ones are of massive circular piers of exceptional height supporting moulded Norman arches. The triforium, which contains two arches in each bay, is again subdivided into four lesser ones. Above the triforium the portion rebuilt subsequent to the fire that destroyed a wooden Norman roof, shows a clerestory of Early English work, and a vaulted roof resting on Purbeck marble shafts which is the work of the monks' own hands. The two western bays of the nave and the west window are Perpendicular. The north aisle of the nave is in harmony with the rest, though its Norman windows are filled with Perpendicular tracery. The south aisle was refaced and groined in 1318, though the interior and some portion of the exterior Norman wall remain with their curtailed piers. The south and canopied porch is of two storys with niches over the door, angle turrets and a richly worked parapet. The transepts are in structure and to some extent in detail of the original Norman work but in the main overlaid with work progressing from Decorated to Perpendicular. For most of this abundant and beautiful fourteenth-century work found throughout the Cathedral, the shade of Edward II, whose body had been previously refused burial by three abbeys fearful of the Queen's anger, is responsible, so

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enormous were the profits which accrued to Gloucester from the offerings of pilgrims at his tomb. The boldness of Abbot Thokey was more than rewarded. Nor surely has any monarch been at once so honoured after death and so justly dishonoured before it as this Royal failure and worse than failure, whom a brutal murder sanctified to the mediaeval mind.

The walls of the choir, which last extends into the tower space, are covered throughout with panel and screen work, though the shape of the Norman arches is still retained, while a most exquisitely-groined roof, springing from clustered shafts, supports the whole. Sixty-two stalls, also of fourteenth-century date, are covered with beautifully wrought canopies, and their carved misericords are symbolic of martial and woodland life. On the tiles of the Sacrarium, believed to be early fifteenth-century, are the arms of Plantagants, Clares and Despencers. The vast east window, said to be the largest in the world, was created at the expense of a semi-circular Norman termination to the choir and two bays which were cut into for the purpose. Its date is mid-fourteenth century, and it contains its original glass representing the coronation of the Virgin, together with the arms of Gloucestershire notables who served in the French campaigns of Edward III. The windows of the choir clerestory are of the same date and contain, in part at any rate, the original stained glass, but the reredos is modern. In the north aisle, also Norman, with Perpendicular windows, a fifteenth-century apsidal chapel, with some finely-carved stone-work, commemorates Abbot Boteler, and near by is the splendid canopied tomb with alabaster effigy of that munificent *post-mortem* benefactor, Edward II. The south choir aisle is of much the same exquisite character as its fellow, though its corresponding chapel displays more of the original Norman work. Both of these last have chapels above them in the triforium which is reached by a flight of steps, and this applies also to the two apsidal chapels in the transepts. There are

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similar chapels in the crypt, so you have here the quite unusual instance of three storys of chapels !

The lady-chapel forms a virtually detached building at the east end of the choir, and is one of the largest in England. From an outside view of the Cathedral it conveys a general impression of being a replica of the choir in miniature, and is one of those distinguishing features that seem to set Gloucester almost in a class by itself among English cathedrals. The vast Perpendicular window spaces, the embattled parapet and pinnacles, suggest a harmony with the main body of the building that differences in detail do little to diminish. As it was built more than a century later than the earlier Perpendicular renovation of the main building, to wit between 1457-99, this general conformity is not surprising. It is entered from the ambulatory of the choir, through a vestibule constructed from the remains of the Norman chapel already referred to as having been removed to make room for the great east window, and is a fine example of the ornate work of that period. It includes a beautifully groined roof with foliated bosses and an east window filling the entire width of the building, which still contains some of the original stained glass. It is of Cruciform design, with five bays and chapels on the north and south, forming short transepts.

The tower of the Cathedral, 225 feet high, is of about the same date as the Lady chapel. It is of two stages and lighted by eight richly-crocketted windows in each stage, and terminates in an open-work embattled parapet, with lofty open pinnacles of remarkable delicacy and grace, showing strong affiliations with Canterbury. But the greatest glory of Gloucester is its cloisters, for they are admittedly without a rival in England, either in extent, completeness, or beauty. Contrary to the usual custom, the cloisters and monastic buildings are here on the north side. They were built by degrees throughout the last half of the fourteenth century, and are lighted by spacious windows, panelled with highly ornate tracery and covered by a most exquisite fan roof,

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itself enriched with panelled groining, the earliest existing specimen of such a roof in England. In one cloister is a series of recesses, technically known as carols, extending under the windows, which were used for the sedentary pursuits of the monks, such as writing and illuminating, and each is lighted by a window. Three out of the four bays comprising the chapter-house are Norman. There is an early vaulted roof, and at the west end, a Norman door and windows, enriched by moulding. For those to whom the makers of history in mediæval England mean something more than names, this building has an interest as holding the dust among others of Walter de Lacy, a great power in his day, and of a still greater one, Richard de Clare, otherwise Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke. The crypt lies under the choir, covering practically the same area, and, one need hardly state, is wholly of the original Norman work, vaulting, piers, capitals and mouldings. Some restoration was necessary in the last century, but was executed without appreciably altering the character of the building. It was after the Dissolution that this noble abbey church of St. Peter became the Cathedral of the diocese of Gloucester, soon afterwards permanently dissociated from that of Worcester to be united in the nineteenth century with Bristol.

A monument in St. Mary's Square, not far from the Cathedral, commemorates the burning of the Marian Bishop Hooper, and from the windows of an old gateway, full of architectural interest, Bishops Gardner and Bonner are said to have gloated over the tortures of the martyred prelate. With the exception of St. Mary le Crypt in Southgate Street, a twelfth-century Cruciform church with two crypts beneath it, and St. Mary de Lode, the mother church of the city, the numerous others are modern either in structure or foundation. The last-named, on the rebuilding of the nave, was discovered to rest upon the site of a Roman temple, supposed to have been used as the first Christian church in England. George Whitfield, who was born in Gloucester, ordained in the Cathe-

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dral, and who died, it will be remembered, in New England, preached his first sermon in St. Mary le Crypt.

But by far the most historically interesting bit of ground in Gloucester, next to the Cathedral, are those few acres of still undesecrated turf which contain the scant remains of Llanthony priory. Now the Severn itself flows a little way to the west of the city proper, but the ship canal, with its harbour docks and warehouses, is actually upon its western fringe. Upon the further bank of the canal harbour, and but a stone's-throw from the litter, noise, and unlovely buildings inseparable from a busy seat of modern commerce, though fenced off within its own home-paddocks and orchards and shaded by ancient trees, there may be seen a still comparatively rural homestead. Here cows are milked and horses stabled in the old monastic barn with its stone buttresses, while in a far corner of the precincts, contrasting strongly with some garish modern railway works, is the embattled priory gateway of early fifteenth-century date. The priory church was demolished when the ship canal was made in the eighteenth century, whether unavoidably, or as an act of careless vandalism, I do not know. The story of this, the daughter but the richer and more powerful of the two Llanthonys, owning land in some three score parishes of the counties of Gloucester and Hereford, is a strange one.

Now the reader will doubtless, if perhaps vaguely, associate the name of Llanthony with the ruins of an abbey romantically situated among the border hills of Wales. If it had not been for the late Father Ignatius I should not expect even such measure of recognition from persons other than antiquaries, east of the Severn. But this earnest though eccentric cleric erected some modest and unremarkable ecclesiastical buildings in the same valley as the glorious remains of Llanthony priory, infelicitously designating his little new buildings by the ambitious title of Llanthony abbey and there collected a handful of semi-Anglican recluses. He thus at the same time advertised the name of Llanthony

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while hopelessly confusing the enquiring stranger, who naturally mixed up the eloquent but unorthodox modern monk and his so called "abbey" with the stately remains of the real Llanthony three miles lower down the valley of the Honddu. They had in fact no connection with each other. Father Ignatius is still a familiar name to the middle-aged and elderly, as he preached with effect all over England, but no audience to speak of ever penetrated to his mountain haunt, and it proved in truth a virtual failure. But its enthusiastic "abbot," and a curious press between them, advertised it far and wide, and many a tourist ascending the Honddu valley discovered to his bewilderment that the great priory ruin which confronted him in its glorious mountain setting had no connection whatever with the modern establishment. The latter, however, will be forgotten with the passing generation and its buildings peradventure turned to other uses.

As to the ancient Llanthony priory, the mother of this one at Gloucester, it sprang originally from a deserted cell, the erection of which was attributed to no less a person than St. David himself. The little Norman church still in parochial use, and older than the roofless abbey beneath which it stands, covers the site of the cell and is still known by the Welsh in the corner of Monmouth and Brecon as "The church of St. David on the river Honddu". Now it so fell out that in the year 1103 a cadet of the great Norman Marcher House of Lacy was hunting in this vale of Ewyas and while contemplating the little crumbling shrine hallowed by the memory of St. David and the beauty of the surrounding scene was suddenly seized with a religious impulse that took immediate and practical shape. For without loss of time he abandoned the world, made the ruinous cell presumably weather-tight, put on a hair shirt and practised such rigid self-abnegation that the fame of his piety, being a man of fashion and exalted birth, reached the Court. Queen Matilda's chaplain Ernicius was thereupon sent down to report on so strange a phenomenon, but fell himself an immediate victim to the charm

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of the spot and de Lacy's magnetic personality and transcendent piety. In brief, he was received into partnership. After this the two distinguished hermits became objects of ceaseless interest and Queen Matilda herself went down to have a look at them. This stirred up Hugh, the head of all the Lacys, to do something for the honour of the family, a worthy impulse which resulted in the endowment and creation of the monastery whose remains so delight us to-day—those few of us who know them. The Pope, too, interested himself in the matter, and a large staff of monks of the Black Augustinians was in due course installed. All went well for a time, but the founders had taken no count of their Welsh neighbours, who liked neither them, their ways, nor their monastery and were only less hostile to the Norman church with its assumption of superiority than they were to the Norman sword.

So in the chaos of Stephen's reign the Welsh made things so hot for the monks that they fled in a body to Hereford, where the bishop, a former prior of Llanthony, took care of them for a couple of years. A few of the more courageous then returned, but the majority stubbornly refused to face the risks of this wild valley on the Welsh frontier. The Lacy chief being dead or indifferent, Milo, Earl of Hereford, whose father had exchanged at the last the sword for the cowl and eventually died a Llanthony monk, was induced to relieve their piteous plight, and he granted them the site in Gloucester where a second Llanthony arose, which was to prove a most unfilial offspring, robbing the mother foundation not only of her monks but of her furniture, her money, and even her bells. For half a century the older monastery in the Honddu valley, otherwise "the vale of Ewyas," languished sorely and the monks of her upstart and now prosperous offspring regarded it contemptuously as a mere place of banishment and penance for erring brethren. When they heard of a new arrival there they would ask one another "What crime has he committed?" So deplorable was its condition that "the brethren had not

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sufficient bread, nor any cassocks to wear nor even breeches to go decently to church in". But at the close of the twelfth century a great change came about. The pride of the de Lacys was at length touched and another Hugh who had become enriched through the Norman-Welsh invasion of Ireland came to the rescue of the family foundation. He endowed it largely with English and Irish land while he or his son and grandson, possibly all of them, made large additions to the original fabric. Yet more, this Gloucester Llanthony was compelled to disgorge the lands she had filched from the mother priory. And now for some three reigns the latter greatly flourished. But its very isolation in the long run proved its undoing. Discipline and conduct inevitably grew slack and scandals multiplied, till in 1376 the Prior had both his eyes torn out by the Canons! This outrage seems to have been the beginning of the final decline. The long wars of Owen Glyndwr aggravated the situation, and soon afterwards things had come to such a pass within the priory walls that the old Llanthony was handed over with all its property to the Gloucester priory which had lived discreetly and been handsomely treated. In a sense, however, the mother foundation may be said to have had her revenge. For while little remains of the Gloucester Llanthony but a barn and a gateway alongside groups of unsightly and inharmonious modern buildings the older Llanthony among the mountains in the vale of Ewyas, immune from all encroachments but the storms and snows of winter, still preserves the roofless but ample remains of her noble church, and a goodly part of her monastic building still occupied and eminently habitable. As a matter of fact, the latter do duty and do it excellently and picturesquely in the character of a hotel mainly patronised by grouse shooters, trout fishers or lovers of the beautiful, the secluded, and the wild. A quainter or more inspiring place of public entertainment I have never taken up my abode in. Your meals are served in what, if memory serves me, was the refectory. Your bread is baked

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in the huge old ovens of the monks. You climb to bed up winding stone staircases and take your rest in the turret chambers of the old Priors and their friends and look down through their deep sunk windows on to the green courtyard, and up to the roofless gables and arches of the noble priory church with the dark line of mountain tops cutting the sky above them; while the music of the Honddu in the bosky dell below mingles with your dreams. In death at any rate the mother priory has come into her own. Serene and undefiled among the silent hills, she may defy the ages. The seclusion, which provoked the anathemas of her worldly-minded monks, has served her well through the centuries of neglect and decay, while all that is left of her unfilial and predatory daughter languishes a pathetic spectacle, among the docks and factories of Gloucester.

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CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

A CATEGORICAL account of the minor antiquities or ecclesiastical buildings of Gloucester is both impossible and undesirable in these pages. The various city gateways, both the main and the lesser ones, had all disappeared by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nor is anything but some half-obscured fragments left of the walls, which, together with a moat, surrounded the city at its famous defence under Massey against Charles I. And Massey, t may be noted, was one of the most active of the Parliamentary generals, and held in much respect by the Royalist leaders in these western fields of war. How he came to change his opinions, like many other honest men, in the succeeding years of Puritan rule, so completely as to join in the rash venture of the young Charles at Worcester, in 1651, and to end his career there, does not concern us here.

Now, the head of sea-going navigation seemed, from the very first, the logical termination of a book on the Severn. Though the actual estuary does not begin to open out for several miles below Gloucester, the river runs its channelled course towards it, between high banks of glistening mud washed by a tide that rises and falls some fifteen feet. A river at this stage, unless it possesses transcendent surroundings, such as those lower and tidal reaches of the Wye, rarely attracts one to its banks. Below Gloucester, too, the vale flattens out, particularly upon its eastern side, in a wide expanse of level, well-wooded country, spreading away to the foot of the Cotswold range. The hitherto clearly defined valley, with all

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its riverside interests and characteristics, practically ceases at Gloucester, and the Severn seems to escape one's grasp in vague meanderings, as it rolls its muddy, secluded course between its tide-washed banks to the sands of the estuary about Newnham.

Every one has heard of the great *bore*, or tidal wave of the Severn, that, at certain periods of the year, under certain phases of the moon, comes rushing up stream in the shape of a wall of water, several feet high. Drayton mentions it in the Polyolbion as the bore or hygre. An eighteenth-century writer, with that strange disregard of proportion and restraint characteristic of the period, and so often indulged in by Defoe, describes it as "rising mountains high and exciting the most terrific and sublime ideas". The last visit I paid to Gloucester happened to cover the period of the autumnal visitation, namely, the last few days of October, and I determined to seize the opportunity. Precisely how far down the estuary the bore begins to rear itself up, and exactly how far above Gloucester its influence is felt, I do not know. But, beyond a doubt it is most effective as a spectacle, just below the city, before the still contracted river-channel broadens out into the estuary. As the bore comes on, the tide travelling, I think, at about ten to twelve miles an hour, the precise moment of its arrival at this point or at that each day is, of course, accurately forecast. I was advised to repair to a spot on the river, some three miles below Gloucester, known as Stonebench, where the wave shows itself to particular advantage, and as being, moreover, a convenient point of access, which is always something where the Severn is concerned. I chose one of those two or three days of its active period, when the bore would be, presumably, at its best, and the hour least unaccommodating. It was due on this occasion at a few minutes past seven in the morning, which last proved absolutely still and clear with a bright sunrise. Following the main road to Berkeley on the eastern side of the Severn, a by-road to the right in due course brought us to its very banks at the

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point known as Stonebench, from a submerged rock that stretches across the bottom of the river. A humble and solitary inn stood on the bank, quite incidentally, I think, and in no way concerned with the bore as an asset of trade. Indeed, few people, I imagine, go out of their way to see the latter, while the locals take it as it comes as a matter of course. But there are occasions, I believe, when it exceeds all reasonable bounds, and invades the neighbouring dwellings.

At any rate, there was no sign of a visitor on this occasion. Solitude and the crisp silence of an early autumn morning, after a sharp night frost, reigned supreme. Though the wave was due here at 7.40, there seemed something so uncanny in a phenomenon like this, running, as the Americans would say, "on schedule time," that even common-sense and tide-tables were not sufficient to deter us from being very nearly half-an-hour before the moment appointed by the latter. I am not sure that even scientists can lucidly analyse the origin of the tidal wave as known here and elsewhere. For myself, I do not profess to any sort of understanding of its mysterious operations, except that they are closely associated with the moon. So I am free to confess to an absurd anxiety lest peradventure that wave should be before time, on the only occasion that would ever perhaps be afforded me of seeing it. The morning was very sharp, and a cheery fire in the inn kitchen, with a tea-pot on the hob, proved a real consolation. In the meantime, swiftly, but with smooth and noiseless current, at its lowest level, some fifteen feet below the grassy bank about the inn door, and about 100 yards in width, the river swished along between its steep muddy banks. Above the margin of the shimmering mud, the ragged green stuff and wiry grass lay wilted and flattened out by the tide of the preceding night, and the ragged sprouts of the amphibious willow-brush, battered, but never vanquished, by continuous buffeting with the currents, hung dejected and motionless above the surface. The sun was by now well up, streaming over the rich green pastures, and lighting up the red and gold

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and russet of the woods of Elmore, that, half a mile below, almost touch the river. We could look down the surface of the latter, all glassy now in the sunshine, for some two or three hundred yards, when a sharp bend in its course took it out of sight. The stillness of everything was intense, disturbed now and again by the raucous call of a moorhen, or the sharp plunge of a water-rat. Far away up the river, the bells of Gloucester were faintly chiming out the half-hour. There was ten minutes more. Despite all the precision with which human knowledge for centuries has been able to tabulate the moment of tides and all therein concerned, there was something altogether outside one's experience, and wholly uncanny, in thus waiting, watch in hand, amid such profound tranquillity, with the certainty that, if the big upset of everything did not occur to the minute, it was one's watch, not the bore, that was out of time. The innkeeper stood with us on the bank. He was a comparatively recent importation, and had only witnessed the spectacle a few times, and was not yet blasé. He knew something of the past story of the house, however, and its sometimes unpleasant experience in spring tides and the like, and gave us fragments of them. We were all watching the corner below, with no little suppressed excitement. I had set my watch by the Cathedral, and, at the very moment appointed, a big dog suddenly appeared round the river bend, rushing along the bank barking furiously. There had been no premonitory sound of any kind, everything was tranquil upon the river's glassy surface along the reach below us. "Here it comes!" said the innkeeper. The dog, as a matter of fact, had been chasing the wave, and, moreover, continued to do so, in a great state of excitement, which is worth noting, perhaps, as rather curious.

For a moment I could not make much of it, except that the sunshine seemed suddenly to radiate and sparkle in a strange manner at the far end of our reach. Then all at once came the hoarse sound of water tearing at resisting banks. When a wind is blowing down stream the bore, I am

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told, has a crested head like an ocean breaker. But there was none of this to-day, nor was it expected. It took less than a minute reaching us and came on in the shape of a single big wave, like those of a swell after a storm at sea. Confronting it we could only follow its approach by the white foam which broke near the top of either bank glittering in the sun, while at our feet the river was still gliding at its lowest level calm and unconscious of the fast-approaching disturbance. The great wave, however, soon rolled up to and past us, filling up the river bed in a few brief seconds, covering mud, willows, and tussocky banks almost to the brim with a mighty gurgling, fretting, and commotion. In almost no time it had swept out of sight round the corner on its way to Gloucester and left a brimming tide to flop and wash and chafe with declining rage for a minute or two against the upper ridges of the bank, as if a big steamer had just passed by. Then all was quiet again as before, but for the excited protests of many moorhens and the angry barking of the dog before some obstacles upon our bank which checked his wild chase of the bore and filled him with a frenzy that, like many canine mysteries, we may not account for. For myself, I was thankful for such measure of energy as enabled me to face a six o'clock breakfast on a cold morning and witness this strange exhibition of the force of nature.

I have alluded above to the woods of Elmore, a place which may be briefly noticed as the last country seat upon the Severn proper. For not far below, its confined meadow-bordered channel opens out and begins to assume the character of an estuary. Elmore Court, lifted up well above the river, is a fine stately-looking old house and incidentally supplies another instance of that long continuity of ownership and occupation for which, as we have seen, the Severn valley is so conspicuous. For the Guise family have been here for centuries, and the ancient and picturesquely placed church is full of their tombs, one brief memorial dating back as far as the fifteenth century.

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In even the most cursory survey of the Severn valley below Gloucester, which is all I can myself profess to have made, Newnham could not possibly be omitted. A dozen miles by road or rail from the city, this beautiful village and almost more than village, spreading along a ridge above the western bank of the estuary, has a well-deserved reputation. With its quaint and sloping High Street, its many spacious Georgian or older residences standing amid timbered grounds or mellow gardens, relics probably of old-time Severn trade, long passed to the ship canal, Newnham has most undoubtedly a special charm of its own. It is on unusual terms of intimacy for one thing with the Severn, now broadening out into an estuary, and this gives it all those further qualities of outlook and environment that such a situation entails. The upper part of the village rests on high ground, which in low red cliffs drops abruptly into the channel of the Severn, thence extending up the river where, skirting the woods of private grounds, a pleasant level open highway with wide grassy fringes extends along the shore. At the head of the steep picturesque High Street, the, in these parts widely-known Victoria Hotel conceals under its rather modern coating a beautiful old house full of Jacobean and early Georgian work, including a fine oak staircase. Several of the rooms are panelled; one of them, however, painted all over at some not very recent period with the colours of the Berkeley Hunt, exhibits a vandalism that, perhaps under the circumstances, is comparatively venial.

But the fairest spot in Newnham undoubtedly is the churchyard, for its striking situation and outlook. The church itself has been rebuilt, but it is not that which concerns us. Scores of romantically situated churches in all parts of England and Wales I can readily recall with the eye of memory, and it is with no futile sense of comparison that I think of Newnham as having a character of its own and unlike anything within my knowledge, in the particular nature of its appeal. For it covers the summit of a high knoll, supported by low

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red cliffs, against which the main current of the river beats with the full rush of its tides. Looking downward is the widening estuary, as I last saw it, spreading over broad yellow sands, and its waters shining, white-flecked, beneath a fresh breeze and a bright autumn sun. Everywhere about is space and distance. Across the river, on which an old row-boat ferry still battles with the swift tides and blustering winds, the wide plain, looking from here like a continuous forest, is backed by the long western barrier of the Cotswold, from the round cap of Bredon Hill by Tewkesbury to the dim hills away beyond Dursley on the far south. Nearly straight ahead of us, high perched upon the slopes of the Cotswolds, seven or eight miles away, lies Painswick, a village notable among Cotswold lovers and Cotswold literature for its beauty of site and glorious outlook over the Severn valley to the Welsh mountains and the Exmoor hills, and a good deal patronised by Gloucester and Cheltenham folk and, indeed, others from far counties. Here too King Charles stayed during the siege of Gloucester. And just visible, not far away, is Berkeley Castle, where the little room is still shown in which the hapless Edward II was done to death. Upon this western bank of the estuary a narrow strip of undulating country, like most of that about the lower Severn rich in apple and pear orchards, climbs up to the wooded ridges of the forest of Dean, whose radiant autumn foliage on this occasion made a fine contrast with the brilliant green of the pasture-fields which hung beneath their skirts.

THE END.

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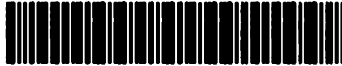
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